Martin Luther and Islam

A Study in Sixteenth-Century Polemics and Apologetics

Adam S. Francisco

BRILL

Martin Luther and Islam

History of Christian-Muslim Relations

Editorial Board

David Thomas, University of Birmingham
Tarif Khalidi, American University of Beirut
Gerrit Jan Reinink, University of Groningen
Mark Swanson, Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago

VOLUME 8

Martin Luther and Islam

A Study in Sixteenth-Century Polemics and Apologetics

by

Adam S. Francisco

BRILL

LEIDEN • BOSTON
2007

Front cover illustration: an image of a Turkish army (with crescent moon flags) attacking a Christian city (presumably Vienna). It is drawn from the Luther Bible of 1534.

Christians and Muslims have been involved in exchanges over matters of faith and morality since the founding of Islam. Attitudes between the faiths today are deeply coloured by the legacy of past encounters, and often preserve centuries-old negative views.

The History of Christian-Muslim Relations, Texts and Studies presents the surviving record of past encounters in authoritative, fully introduced text editions and annotated translations, and also monograph and collected studies. It illustrates the development in mutual perceptions as these are contained in surviving Christian and Muslim writings, and makes available the arguments and rhetorical strategies that, for good or for ill, have left their mark on attitudes today. The series casts light on a history marked by intellectual creativity and occasional breakthroughs in communication, although, on the whole beset by misunderstanding and misrepresentation. By making this history better known, the series seeks to contribute to improved recognition between Christians and Muslims in the future.

This book is printed on acid-free paper.

A C.I.P. record for this book is available from the Library of Congress.

ISSN: 1570-7350
ISBN: 978 90 04 16043 9

Copyright 2007 by Koninklijke Brill NV, Leiden, The Netherlands.
Koninklijke Brill NV incorporates the imprints Brill, Hotei Publishing,
IDC Publishers, Martinus Nijhoff Publishers and VSP.

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, translated, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without prior written permission from the publisher.

Authorization to photocopy items for internal or personal use is granted by Koninklijke Brill NV provided that the appropriate fees are paid directly to The Copyright Clearance Center, 222 Rosewood Drive, Suite 910, Danvers, MA 01923, USA.
Fees are subject to change.

PRINTED IN THE NETHERLANDS

CONTENTS

Acknowledgments vii
Abbreviations xi
Introduction 1

PART ONE. ISLAM AND THE WEST, 1095–1546

Chapter One. Responses to Islam in the West During the Middle Ages 9
Chapter Two. The Turks and Islam in the Sixteenth Century 31
Chapter Three. Dimensions of Luther's Thought On the Turks 67
Chapter Four. Luther's Knowledge of and Attitude Towards Islam 97

PART TWO. MARTIN LUTHER'S ENGAGEMENT WITH ISLAM, 1529–1546

Chapter Five. Luther's Initial Critique of Islam 131
Chapter Six. An Existential Apologetic for Christians in the *Mahometisch Reich* 151
Chapter Seven. Luther's Polemical Apologetic Against Islam 175
Chapter Eight. Luther's Apology for Christianity 211

Conclusion 233
Bibliography 239
Index 257

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This monograph began as a doctoral thesis at the University of Oxford, and would never have been completed without the assistance and support of my supervisors, Reverend Dr. Graham Tomlin (Wycliffe Hall and now St. Paul's Theological Centre, London) and Professor Dr. Yahya Michot (Oxford Centre for Islamic Studies). Dr. Tomlin, in addition to guiding me through the whole process of planning and preparing this study, kept me on course to finish what sometimes felt like an endless task. Equally helpful was his keen ability to point me past the surface of Luther's thought towards the 'meat' of his theology. Working with Prof. Michot was likewise a great experience. His penetrating analysis of early drafts of this thesis was always beneficial and encouraging. He was also an enormous help in understanding Islam and, in addition, helping me to recognise my own misunderstandings of what is now not such an alien faith. On top of that, above and beyond the call of his supervisory duties, he gave up innumerable hours to read the Qur'ān with me as I began my studies in Arabic.

In addition to my supervisors, I was also fortunate to have two outstanding thesis examiners. Professor Diarmaid MacCulloch (St. Cross College) and Dr. David Thomas (University of Birmingham) not only made the experience of being examined in front of two luminaries in the respective fields of Reformation history and Christian-Muslim relations less intimidating than it could have been, but they also provided several helpful insights and suggestions for improving the text. (I have heeded their advice, but all errors and deficiencies remain my own, of course.)

While there are a host of other people who encouraged me along the way, perhaps some of the greatest aid I received was in the form of financial and material support. The Warburg Institute at the University of London's School of Advanced Studies much to my surprise awarded me the Albin Salton Fellowship, which provided me with the time and funds to look at materials pertinent to gaining a broader understanding of medieval and early modern European history in relation to the Muslim world. Wycliffe Hall also provided me with a bursary (and

occasional employment) thereby enabling me to continue with full-time research so that I could complete this study within a reasonable amount of time.

During my time in Oxford and now, while preparing the manuscript for publication, colleagues, friends, and family have in large and small ways also contributed to this monograph. First and formost, many thanks go out to Professor Dr. Rod Rosenbladt who intitially encouraged me to pursue a doctoral degree and continued to encourage me through the whole process. Dr. Korey Maas, for whom I first began my venture into Luther research at Concordia University Irvine, CA, was and continues to be a great source of information and insight into all things historical and theological. He and his wife Kate also opened up their home in Cambridge to my family innumberable times over the course of our three-year hiatus in England, providing us with much needed holidays away from Oxford. My family was also incredibly fortunate to have made the acquaintance of Jason and Ashley Foster, our friends from Wycliffe Hall, Summertown House, and now Louisiana. They shared many a meal with us, and always helped us whenever we found ourselves in a pinch. Paul and Helena Simons, too, enriched our lives in countless ways, inviting us into their home for tea, dinner, and overnight stays whenever we passed through following our move from Oxford.

Now that I have moved back to the USA I have a whole new set of colleagues and friends to thank. Kathryn Galchutt, Kristen Koenig, Scott Ashmon, Marty Conkling, Paul Stabile, and others continue in various ways to encourage my scholarly proclivities, and I cannot thank them enough for keeping me sane while juggling a full load of lecturing with an active research agenda. The efficient professionalism of the editorial staff at E.J. Brill have likewise made tremendous contributions in seeing this book through the process of publication.

Last but certainly not least I owe my family an incredible amount of thanks for their constant encouragement and support. My parents, Tim and Anne, always supported me in whatever ways they could, and they could not have provided a better gift when they met their daughter-in-law, new grandson, and me in Germany, funding our travel and some research throughout Luther's homeland. My parents-in-law, Robert and Priscilla Newton, also supported us during our time in England, taking us on holiday to Scotland and sending a steady stream of cheques so that we could, on occasion, enjoy some time away from Luther. Finally, and most importantly, I could not have completed this

study without the love and support of my wife Rachel, who, for the last six years, has worked various jobs to help make ends meet, even during the full course of her pregnancy—and then some—with our first born son Timothy Roderick. Rachel and Timmy, in addition to reminding me not to take myself too seriously, bring a tremendous amount of joy to my life.

ABBREVIATIONS

AFP	*Archivum Fratrum Praedicatorum*
AHDL	*Archives d'Histoire Doctrinale et Littéraire du Moyen Âge*
AHR	*American Historical Review*
AJSLL	*American Journal of Semitic Languages and Literature*
AOH	*Acta Orientalia Hungaricae*
ARG	*Archiv für Reformationgeschichte*
AUSS	*Andrews University Seminary Studies*
BELK	*Die Bekenntnisschriften der evangelisch-lutherischen Kirchen* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 1952).
BJRL	*Bulletin of the John Rylands Library*
BRIIFS	*Bulletin of the Royal Institute for Inter-Faith Studies*
BS	*Balkan Studies*
BTZ	*Berliner Theologische Zeitschrift*
BVG	*Beitrage zur Vaterländischen Geshichte*
BZGA	*Basler Zeitschrift fur Geschichte und Altertumskunde*
CA	Riccoldo da Monte di Croce, *Confutatio Alcorani seu legis Saracenorum, ex graeco nuper in latinum traducta*, trans. Bartholomaeus Picenus de Montearduo, in WA 53:273–387.
CrA	Nicholas of Cusa, *Cribratio Alkorani*, in Jasper Hopkins (trans.), *Nicholas of Cusa's De Pace Fidei and Cribratio Alkorani*, 2nd edn. (Minneapolis: Arthur J. Banning Press, 1994); available from http://www.cla.umn.edu/sites/jhopkins.
CH	*Church History*
CISC	Corpus Islamo-Christianum
CJ	*Concordia Journal*
ClS	Riccoldo da Monte di Croce, *Contra legem Sarracenorum*, in Jean-Marie Mérigoux, (ed.), 'L'ouvrage d'un frère prêcheur florentin en Orient à la fin du XIIIe siècle. Le *Contra legem Sarracenorum* de Riccoldo da Monte di Croce', *MD*, 15 (1986), 60–144.
CR	*Corpus Reformatorum*
CTM	*Concordia Theological Monthly*
CT&M	*Currents in Theology and Mission*
CTQ	*Concordia Theological Quarterly*
CW	*Die Christliche Welt*
DI	*Dictionary of Islam*
EI²	*Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd edn.
ET	*Evangelische Theologie*
ETI	*En Terre de l'Islam*
GTJ	*Grace Theological Journal*

H-B	Sarah Henrich and James Boyce, 'Martin Luther—Translations of Two Prefaces on Islam: *Preface to the* Libellus de ritu et moribus Turcorum *(1530)*, and *Preface to Bibliander's Edition of the Qur'ān (1543)*', *WW* 16:2 (1996), 250–266.
Is	*Der Islam: Zeitschrift fur Geschichte und Kultur des islamischen Orients*
ICMR	*Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations*
IJMES	*International Journal of Middle East Studies*
JBR	*Journal of Bible and Religion*
JEMH	*Journal of Early Modern History*
JES	*Journal of Ecumenical Studies*
JIS	*Journal of Islamic Studies*
JSOT	*Journal for the Study of the Old Testament*
LC	*Luther's Correspondence and Other Contemporary Letters*, 2 vols., trans. Henry Preserved Smith and Charles Jacobs (Philadelphia: Lutheran Publication Society, 1918).
Ld	Anonymous, *Liber denudationis siue ostensionis aut patefaciens*, in Thomas Burman (trans.), *Religious Polemic and the Intellectual Tradition of the Mozarabs, c. 1050–1200* (Leiden; E.J. Brill, 1994), 215–388.
LM	*Luther Monatsblatt*
LMJ	*Lutherisches Missionsjahrbuch*
LQ	*Lutheran Quarterly*
LSQ	*Lutheran Synod Quarterly*
LTM	*The Church Comes from All Nations: Luther Texts on Mission*
LuJ	*Luther-Jahrbuch*
LW	*Luther's Works*, 55 vols. (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House and Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1955–1986).
MA	*Missio Apostolica*
Machumetis	Theodor Bibliander (ed.), *Machumetis Sarracenorum principis vita ac doctrina omnis, quam & Ismahelitarum lex, & Alcoranum dicitur* (Basel: Oporinus, 1543).
MD	*Memorie Domenicane* (*nuova serie*)
MLR	*Modern Language Review*
MR	*Moslemische Revue*
MW	*The Muslim World* (before 1948, *Moslem World*)
NAMZ	*Neue Allgemeine Missionzeitschrift*
NTT	*Nederlands Theologische Tijdschrift*
NZSTR	*Neue Zeitschrift für Systematische Theologie und Religionsphilosophie*
ODCC	Cross, F.L. and E.A. Livingstone (eds.), *The Oxford Dictionary of Christian Church*, 3rd edn. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997).
OER	Hillerbrand, Hans J. (ed.), *The Oxford Encyclopedia of the Reformation*, 4 vols. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996).
PAPS	*Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society*
PRS	*Perspectives in Religious Studies*
Q	The Qur'ān, trans. Abdullah Yusuf Ali
RB	*Revue Biblique*
REI	*Revue des Études Islamiques*

RH	*Revue Histoire*
RR	*Reformed Review*
RT	*Revue Thomiste*
SCH	*Studies in Church History*
SCJ	*Sixteenth Century Journal*
SF	*Südost-Forschungen*
SI	*Studia Islamica*
SJT	*Scottish Journal of Theology*
SR	*Studies in the Renaissance*
TAPS	*Transactions of the American Philosophical Society*
TR	*Theological Review*
Tractatus	Georgius de Hungaria, *Tractatus de Moribus, Condictionibus et Nequicia Turcorum-Traktat über die Sitten, die Lebensverhältnisse und die Arglist der Türken (1481)*, ed. and trans. Reinhard Klockow (Köln: Böhlau, 1993).
TSK	*Theologische Studien und Kritiken*
TTZ	*Trierer Theologische Zeitschrift*
TZ	*Theologische Zeitschrift*
V&F	*Verkündigung und Forschung*
WA	*D. Martin Luthers Werke*, 69 vols. (Weimar: Böhlau, 1883–2001).
WA Br	*D. Martin Luthers Werke: Briefwechsel*, 18 vols. (Weimar: Böhlau, 1930–1985).
WA DB	*D. Martin Luthers Werke: Deutsche Bibel*, 12 vols. (Weimar: Böhlau, 1906–1961).
WA TR	*D. Martin Luthers Werke: Tischreden*, 6 vols. (Weimar: Böhlau, 1912–1921).
W&A	*Wort und Antwort*
WW	*Word and World*
WZGSR	*Wissenschaftliche Zeitschrift Gesellschafts- und Sprachwissenschaftliche Reihe*
WZMLU	*Wissenschaftliche Zeitschrift Martin-Luther-Universität Halle-Wittenberg*
ZDMG	*Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenlandischen Gesellschaft*
ZKG	*Zeitschrift für Kirchengeschichte*
ZRGG	*Zeitschrift für Religions- und Geistesgeschichte*
Zw	*Zwingliana*

INTRODUCTION

The Ottoman assault upon Vienna in 1529 sent shockwaves throughout Germany. Although the Habsburg army had successfully thwarted the attack, according to eyewitness accounts some 30,000 people in surrounding towns and villages had either been killed or taken back to Istanbul for sale in the slave market.[1] What was perhaps more unsettling, at least to those who were perceptive of the ideological motivation behind the siege, was the determination of Sultan Süleyman (1520–1566) and his Muslim Turkish army to 'conquer the infidel lands for Islam.'[2] In response to the threat, and after reading what he considered the best description of Ottoman religion and culture—Georgius de Hungaria's *Tractatus de moribus, condictionibus et nequicia Turcorum* (1481)—Martin Luther (1483–1546) wrote, 'Since we now have the Turk and his religion at our very doorstep our people must be warned lest, either moved by the splendour of the Turkish religion and the external appearances of their customs or displeased by the meagre display of our own faith or the deformity of our customs, they deny their Christ and follow Muḥammad.'[3] Assessing the nature of Ottoman religion and culture, and the threat that it posed to Christians even further, he continued:

> We see that the religion of the Turks or Muḥammad is far more splendid in ceremonies—and, I might almost say, in customs—than ours, even including that of the religious or all the clerics. The modesty and the simplicity of their food, clothing, dwellings, and everything else, as well as the fasts, prayers, and common gatherings of the people [at mosque] that this book reveals are nowhere seen among us …. [W]hich of our monks, be it a Carthusian (they who wish to appear the best) or a Benedictine, is not put to shame by the miraculous and wonderous abstinence and discipline among their religious? Our religious are mere shadows when

---

[1] Gregory Miller, 'Holy War and Holy Terror: Views of Islam in German Pamphlet Literature, 1520–1545' (PhD Dissertation: Boston University, 1994), 67–68.

[2] Norman Itzkowitz, *Ottoman Empire and Islamic Tradition* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1972), 38.

[3] *Vorwort zu dem* Libellus de ritu et moribus Turcorum, WA 30/2:207.24–27 (H-B, 260).

> compared to them, and our people clearly profane compared to theirs. Not even true Christians, nor Christ himself, not the apostles or prophets ever exhibited so great a display [of religiosity]. This is the reason why many persons so easily depart from faith in Christ for Muḥammadanism and adhere to it so tenaciously. I sincerely believe that no papist, monk, cleric or their equal in faith would be able to remain in their faith if they should spend three days among the Turks.[4]

In fact, he impulsively added, 'if it should come to the point of arguing about religion, the whole papistry with all of its trappings would fall. Nor would they be able to defend their own faith and at the same time refute the faith of Muḥammad.'[5] In light of this startling evaluation, Luther thought it was vital to address the religion of the Turks, for, as Richard Southern wrote years ago, 'he looked forward to the probability that Christendom would be engulfed in Islam.'[6]

As is the case with nearly every other aspect of the Reformer's thought, there are quite a few scholarly surveys dealing with the theme of Luther, the Turks, and Islam,[7] but few have examined, specifically, his criticism of Muslim beliefs and arguments in favour of the Christian religion. Even those that have attempted to do so suggest he was not really concerned with the ideology of Islam, and thus failed to engage it theologically. For example, in his influential essay, *Martin Luther und der Islam*, Ludwig Hagemann argues that Luther 'was not concerned with Islam as a religious factor.' Instead, his 'argument with Islam was

---

[4] *Vorwort*, WA 30/2:206.3–17 (H-B, 259).

[5] *Vorwort*, WA 30/2:207.6–8 (H-B, 260).

[6] Richard Southern, *Western Views of Islam in the Middle Ages* (London: Harvard University Press, 1962), 105–106.

[7] See, most recently, Hartmut Bobzin, '"Aber itzt … hab ich den Alcoran gesehen Latinisch …" Gedanken Martin Luthers zum Islam', in Hans Medick and Peer Schmidt (eds.), *Luther Zwischen den Kulturen* (Göttingen: Vandernhoeck and Ruprecht, 2004), 260–276 as well as his 'Martin Luthers Beitrag zur Kenntnis und Kritik des Islam', *NZSTR* 27 (1985), 262–289; '"A Treasury of Heresies": Christian Polemics against the Koran', in Stefan Wild (ed.), *The Qur'ān as Text* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1996), 157–175; and *Der Koran im Zeitalter der Reformation: Studien zur Frühgeschichte der Arabistik und Islamkunde in Europa* (Stuttgart: Steiner Verlag, 1995), 13–156. Also see Gregory Miller, 'Luther on the Turks and Islam', *LQ* 14 (2000), 79–97; J. Paul Rajashekar, 'Luther and Islam: An Asian Perspective' *LuJ* 57 (1990), 174–191; Rudolf Mau, 'Luthers Stellung zu den Türken', in Helmar Junghans (ed.), *Leben und Werk Martin Luthers von 1526 bis 1546: Festgabe zu seinem 500. Geburtstag in Auftrag des theologischen Arbeitskreis für Reformationsgeschichte Forschung* (Göttingen: Vandenhöck und Ruprecht, 1983), 647–662; Mark U. Edwards, *Luther's Last Battles: Politics and Polemics, 1531–1546* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1983), 97–114; and Egil Grislis, 'Luther and the Turks', *MW* 64 (1974), 180–193, 275–291.

essentially determined by two factors: 1. It was shaped by the contemporary military threat of Europe by the Muslim Ottomans. 2. It rested completely upon his own existential dispute with Rome.' Both of these 'obstructed his view' of Islam as a 'faith with its own roots and originality', he contends, and, rather than his knowledge and perceptions of the problems of Islamic doctrines, best explains his 'massive critique' of the Turks and their religion.[8] More recently, in his unpublished 2003 dissertation, 'Martin Luther's Response to the Turkish Threat', David Choi argues that, while Luther was informed of Muslim beliefs, his argumentation with Islam was only a matter of coincidence. Accordingly, he wrote, Luther 'was interested in the Turks primarily as a pastor and only secondarily as a theologian and incidentally as a scholar and polemicist.' Thus, he concludes that Luther was not really concerned with critiquing the Qur'ān, attacking the prophethood of Muḥammad, criticising and refuting Muslim beliefs, or arguing for the superiority of Christianity. Rather, he was primarily interested in encouraging Christians to 'repent, love the gospel, and be obedient to their authorities' as a way of dealing with the threat of the Ottoman Turks.[9]

This study will demonstrate that Luther's approach towards Islam was much more theological and apologetic than is generally acknowledged.[10] As such, his thoughts and writings on the Turks and their religion deserve more attention in the history of Christian perceptions of and responses to Islam, for, in his unique attacks on Islam as well as his assimilation of apologetic material from previous centuries, he put forward his own subtly-nuanced approach towards the Muslim world.[11]

---

[8] Ludwig Hagemann, *Martin Luther und der Islam* (Altenberge: Christlich-Islamisches Schrifttum, 1998), 16, 33–34. This essay was originally published in 1983 and also appears as 'Zum Islamverständnis Martin Luthers', *MR* 14 (1994), 83–91 and 'Der Islam in Verständnis und Kritik bei Martin Luther', *TTZ* 103:2 (1994), 131–151.

[9] David Choi, 'Martin Luther's Response to the Turkish Threat: Continuity and Contrast with the Medieval Commentators Riccoldo da Monte Croce and Nicholas of Cusa' (PhD Dissertation: Princeton Theological Seminary, 2003), 151, 179–185.

[10] For this study, 'apologetic(s)' is defined broadly—following Avery Dulles (*A History of Apologetics* [London: Hutchinson, 1971], xvi), Otto Zöckler (*Geschichte der Apologie des Christentums* [Gütersloh: C. Bertelsmann, 1907], 1–4), and Friederich Schleiermacher (*Brief Outline on the Study of Theology*, 2nd edn., trans. Terrence N. Tice [Atlanta: John Knox, 1977], 31)—as the vindication of Christianity either by defending the legitimacy of its historical existence and theological motifs or, conversely, polemically refuting other faiths.

[11] For cursory treatments of Luther in the broader history of Christian perceptions of Islam, see Southern, *Western Views*, 104–107; Hugh Goddard, *A History of Christian-*

This will be demonstrated, first, by exploring the historical background of Christian views and approaches to the Muslim world during the medieval period up until the first half of the sixteenth century in order to obtain a general view of previous approaches. It will also help establish the broader historical context which provided the impetus for Luther's engagement with Islam. The dimensions of Luther's thought concerning the threat that the Ottomans posed to Europe will then be focused in on and surveyed to provide a comprehensive picture of his ideas regarding how Germany and its Christians should respond to the threat. Included in this aspect of Luther's mental world, as will be shown, was a growing anticipation of contact between Christians and Muslims. This immediately gave rise to his conviction that the adverse ideology of Islam had to be countered. Thus, before turning to an examination of his various attempts to 'defend' the Christian faith and 'refute the faith of Muḥammad', his study and perceptions of the beliefs and practices of Ottoman Muslim society are examined. While Luther was no Islamicist, he did obtain, considering the circumstances and historical context, a fairly decent knowledge of Islam, and drawing upon his knowledge he set out in 1529 to inform his readers about the religion of the Turks. In two successive periods he attempted to expose the inherent problems with Muslim beliefs as well as to provide arguments against their religious practices and doctrines and defences of the superiority and legitimacy of the Christian faith. All in all, while borrowing and adapting many arguments and criticisms from medieval authors, Luther provided a somewhat fresh approach to Islam, ranging from formal theological argumentation to practical advice for Christians living amidst Muslims.

The foregoing study will prove beneficial for at least three reasons. To begin with, it will contribute to Luther scholarship in general, especially his place in the history of Christian apologetics, for neither of the two most popular and accessible historical surveys—Avery Dulles' *History of Apologetics* and Otto Zöckler's *Geschichte der Apologie*—even mention

---

Muslim Relations (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2000), 111; Daniel Vitkus, 'Early Modern Orientalism: Representations of Islam in Sixteenth- and Seventeenth-Century Europe', in David Blanks and Michael Frassetto (eds.), *Western Views of Islam in Medieval and Early Modern Europe: Perception of Other* (London: Macmillan Press, 1999), 212–213; and Stephen Fischer-Galati, 'The Protestant Reformation and Islam', in Abraham Ascher, Tibor Halasi-Kun, and Béla Kiraly (eds.), *The Mutual Effects of the Islamic and Judeo-Christian Worlds: The East European Pattern* (New York: Brooklyn College Press, 1979), 53–57.

his engagement with Islam and the Qur'ān.[12] It will also provide a perspective into Luther's thought on a non-Christian religion other than his notorious dealings with Judaism. And thirdly, it will be helpful for understanding the intellectual turmoil that was established in this key period of Christian-Muslim relations, which, in turn, provides the backdrop for many of the tensions that remain in the modern era.[13]

Before delving into this study, a few comments are necessary in order to explain some of its stylistic peculiarities. First, and already appearing above in notes 3 through 5, citations from Luther's writings are always given to the standard critical edition of his works, the Weimarer Ausgabe (WA), in the following format: volume:page number.line(s). If a translation of a cited text has been used, then the source for the translation is provided in parentheses (e.g., LW for the American Edition of *Luther's Works*) following the Weimar reference. If there is no English translation available (or it is inadequate), the original text is also provided in the footnote. Furthermore, when Luther's works are referenced, a short title is provided rather than referring non-descriptively to 'WA.' With regard to titles, whether it is Luther's writing or another medieval or early modern work, they generally appear as they did in their time unless only a title assigned by a modern editor is available. On a different note, dates provided with the names of authorities such as sultans, popes, and emperors correspond to the terms of their particular office. All others, unless otherwise indicated, refer to the lifespan of the individual. And finally, regarding Arab names and terminology, I have generally followed the same transliteration system of the *Journal of Islamic Studies*, although terms such as Mecca, Medina, caliph, *et alia* are spelled in accordance with their common useage.

[12] See Dulles, *History*, 113–114; Zöckler, *Geschichte*, 309–310.
[13] See Miller, 'Holy War', 3–4, 301–302.

PART ONE

ISLAM AND THE WEST, 1095–1546

CHAPTER ONE

RESPONSES TO ISLAM IN THE WEST DURING THE MIDDLE AGES

According to R.W. Southern, 'The existence of Islam was the most far-reaching problem in medieval Christendom.'[1] Ideologically, it was viewed as an archenemy of Christianity. Historically and geographically, it proved relentless in its pursuit of political hegemony. And culturally, it was perceived to be an alien and vicious civilization. With this antagonistic vision of Islam in mind, medieval writers responded in a variety of ways. Apologists and missionaries attacked the Qur'ān in an effort to undermine its doctrine. Exegetes and theologians, having their long-held assumptions about the triumph of Christian civilization challenged, interpreted the phenomenal growth of the Muslim world in line with biblical eschatological prophecy. Pilgrims and travellers to the Holy Land and former captives of the Turks described the peculiar institutions and beliefs of Islam in an effort to raise the level of awareness of the foreign culture and religion of their Muslim neighbors. Towards the end of the Middle Ages, when Luther began to address Islam he turned almost exclusively to these works. Hence, a proper understanding of the various approaches to and perceptions of the Muslim world put forward in them is essential to provide the historical and intellectual background to Luther's study of and response to Islam. Due to the rich and diverse history of the medieval literary corpus, however, this survey is necessarily restricted to the sources that he was exposed to and particularly those he relied upon for his information.

Christian Polemics and Apologetics

The image of Islam throughout most of western Europe prior to and during the crusading period was severely distorted if not completely fictitious, the product of a vivid imagination of the religious other.[2]

[1] Southern, *Western Views*, 3.

[2] See, among others, Jo Ann Hoeppner Moran Cruz, 'Popular Attitudes toward

Muslims were typically thought to be morally-depraved pagan idolaters or Satan-inspired barbarians, and from the time that Pope Urban II (1088–1099) preached the re-conquest of the Holy Land the various distorted images were latched onto and used as 'propaganda to excite the passions of the Christians against the Muslims.'[3] 50 years into the crusading era, however, Abbot Peter of Cluny (d. 1156) sought to remedy the 'abysmal state of knowledge about Islam in Europe.'[4] During a trip to Spain in 1142 he acquired several Arabic manuscripts and commissioned a team of Arabists to translate them into Latin so that, as he wrote in his short summary of Islamic doctrine, 'it might be known how foul and worthless this heresy [is], and in order that some servant of God should be incited … to refute it in writing.'[5] Over a decade later, in his *Liber contra sectam sive haeresim Saracenorum*, he also revealed the missiological intentions behind the project. Envisioning the possibility of his own work being translated into Arabic, he addressed his potential Muslim readers:

> It seems strange, and perhaps it really is, that I, a man so very distant from you in place, speaking a different language, having a state of life separate from yours, a stranger to your customs and life, write from the far parts of the West to men who inhabit the lands of the East and South, and that I attack, by my utterance, those whom I have never seen, whom I shall perhaps never see. But I do not attack you, as some of us often do, by arms, but by words; not by force, but by reason; not in hatred, but in love.[6]

Islam in Medieval Europe' and John Tolan, 'Muslims as Pagan Idolaters in Chronicles of the First Crusade', in David Blanks and Michael Frassetto (eds.), *Western Views of Islam in Medieval and Early Modern Europe: Perception of Other* (London: Macmillan Press, 1999), 55–82, 97–118 (respectively); Dana Carleton Munro, 'The Western Attitude toward Islam during the Period of the Crusades', *Speculum* 6:3 (1931), 329–343.

[3] Munro, 'Western Attitude', 330.

[4] James Kritzeck, *Peter the Venerable and Islam* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1964), 30. In addition to Kritzeck's standard work, for Peter of Cluny's attitude and approach towards Islam, see John Tolan, *Saracens: Islam in the Medieval European Imagination* (Chichester: Columbia University Press, 2002), 155–165 and 'Peter the Venerable on the "Diabolical Heresy of the Saracens"', in Alberto Ferreiro (ed.), *The Devil, Heresy, and Witchcraft in the Middle Ages: Essays in Honor of Jeffrey B. Russell* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1998), 345–367.

[5] Peter of Cluny, *Summa totius haeresis Saracenorum*, cited in Kritzeck, *Peter the Venerable*, 42–43.

[6] Cited in Kritzeck, *Peter the Venerable*, 158, 161. Peter of Cluny's zeal for converting Muslims through apologetic discourse rather than force should not lead one to think that he did not support the crusades, for, according to Elizabeth Siberry, not only did he praise the crusading armies but he also played an active role in attempting to launch

Peter of Cluny's project was complete by the end of 1143. His team of Arabists had translated three sources of Islamic tradition (*ḥadīth*) and an older but very influential Arab Christian apologetic (the apology of Al-Kindī), but by far the most significant achievement was the Latin translation of the Qur'ān.[7] It took the translator, an Englishman named Robert of Ketton (1114–1187), who reportedly worked alongside a Muslim so that it, as Peter wrote, 'should not lack the fullest fidelity', over a year to finish the project.[8]

Still, the arduous task paid off. All of the evidence indicates that, in spite of the availability of other translations in the forthcoming centuries, Robert's was the 'standard version' for European readers and refuters of the Qur'ān up until the eighteenth century.[9] Nevertheless, although it was widely used it has been the subject of considerable criticism stemming back to the comments of the fifteenth century Qur'ān translator Juan de Segovia (c. 1393–1458),[10] who complained that not only did Robert translate too freely but he also distorted the meaning of the text.[11] In the twentieth century, Marie-Thérèse d'Alverny condemned it as a completely untrustworthy and misleading translation,[12] and Norman Daniel has accused it of being responsible for the constant

---

a crusade in the early 1150s ('Missionaries and Crusaders, 1095–1274: Opponents or Allies?' *SCH* 20 [1983], 103–104).

[7] On the translators and translations, see Kritzeck, *Peter the Venerable*, 56–112 as well as his 'Peter the Venerable and the Toledan Collection', in Giles Constable and James Kritzeck (eds.), *Petrus Venerabilis (1156–1956): Studies and Texts Commemorating the Eighth Centenary of His Death*, (Rome: Orbis Catholicus, 1956), 176–201.

[8] Kritzeck, *Peter the Venerable*, 68; cf. Thomas Burman, '*Tafsīr* and Translation: Traditional Arabic Qur'ān Exegesis and the Latin Qur'āns of Robert of Ketton and Mark of Toledo', *Speculum* 73 (1998), 703–705.

[9] Burman, '*Tafsīr*', 705; Bobzin, *Der Koran*, 221–236, 262–275. Seventy years after Robert finished his translation a Spaniard known as Mark of Toledo (fl. 1193–1216) translated the Qur'ān anew. There were at least two more complete and one partial translations of the text into Latin before 1540 as well. See Thomas Burman, 'Polemic, Philology, and Ambivalence: Reading the Qur'ān in Latin Christendom', *JIS* 15:2 (2004), 187–188; Bobzin, 'Latin Translation of the Koran: A Short Overview', *Is* 70 (1993), 193–206.

[10] For biographical details, see Anna Echevarria, *The Fortress of Faith: The Attitude towards Muslims in Fifteenth Century Spain* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1999), 34–40.

[11] Burman, '*Tafsīr*', 705; Southern, *Western Views*, 87–88. For specific examples, see Ludwig Hagemann, 'Die erste lateinische Koranübersetzung—Mittel zur Verständigung zwischen Christen und Muslimen im Mittelalter', in Albert Zimmermann and Ingrid Craemer-Ruegenberg (eds.), *Orientalische Kultur und europäisches Mittelalter* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1985), 45–58.

[12] Marie-Thérèse d'Alverny, 'Deux Traductions Latines du Coran au Moyen Âge', *AHDL* 22–23 (1947–1948), 86, 115.

reiteration of distortions of Islam during the Middle Ages. Robert, he states, 'was always liable to heighten or exaggerate a harmless text in order to give it a nasty or a licentious ring, or to prefer an improbable but unpleasant interpretation of the meaning to a likely but normal and decent one.'[13] There is certainly no reason to deny that Robert's translation is best described as a paraphrase and, likewise, that it served to fuel the majority of medieval anti-Muslim polemics. But, at the same time, he still sought to elucidate the true meaning of the text. 'Selecting nothing, altering nothing in the sense except for the sake of intelligibility', he wrote, 'I have uncovered Muḥammad's smoke so that it may be extinguished by your bellows.'[14] And although he paraphrased and exaggerated the Qur'ānic text in order to draw attention to elements he found particularly reprehensible,[15] he did render important passages in such a way that a careful reader could gain a fairly accurate picture of Islam, especially where it comes into conflict with Christianity.[16]

One medieval apologist that did not need the help of Latin translations of Arabic texts, although he still used them, was Riccoldo da Monte di Croce (1243–1320).[17] The Italian native entered the Dominican order in 1267, and set out on a pilgrimage to the Holy Land in 1288 after which he ventured eastward. By 1290 he reached Baghdad where he began his formal instruction in Arabic.[18] After spending nearly a decade in the Orient he returned to Florence around 1300 and spent the rest of his life attending to ecclesiastical duties. While he humbly described himself as the least of the Dominicans (*minimus in Ordine Pred-*

---

[13] Norman Daniel, *Islam and the West: The Making of an Image*, 2nd edn. (Oxford: One World, 1993), 165.

[14] Robert of Ketton, *Praefatio Roberti Translatoris ad Dominum Petrum Abbatem Cluniacensem, in Libro Legis Saracenorum, quem Alchoran vocant*, in *Machumetis*, a4^{r}.40–42: '[N]il excerpens, nil sensibiliter nisi propter intelligentiam tantum alterans, attuli. Machometíque sumum, ad ipsius tuis follibus extinctum.'

[15] For example, see Daniel, *Islam*, 165, 198–201, 351.

[16] Daniel, *Islam*, 35, 36–66. *A fortiori*, see Thomas Burman's argument that 'Robert's translation … despite being the thoroughgoing paraphrase that d'Alverny and her predecessors condemned, is nonetheless a version of the Qur'ān that in many instances is surprisingly faithful to the received, Muslim understanding of that sacred book' ('*Tafsīr*', 708 *et passim*).

[17] The most complete biography is Emilio Panella's 'Ricerche su Riccoldo da Monte di Croce', *AFP* 58 (1988), 5–85. An overview of his writings on Islam can be found in Jean-Marie Mérigoux, 'Un Précurseur du Dialogue Islamo-Chrétien, Frére Ricoldo', *RT* 73 (1973), 609–621.

[18] For his travels, see L. Michael Spath, 'Riccoldo Da Monte Croce: Medieval Pilgrim and Traveler to the Heart of Islam', *BRIIFS* 1:1 (Spring 1999), 55–102.

icatorum), contemporary scholarly opinion has dubbed him 'the greatest Dominican missionary of the thirteenth century.'[19] He is perhaps most well-known for his 'extremely influential' treatise on Islam entitled *Contra legem Sarracenorum*,[20] which he wrote shortly after his return to Italy in order to instruct future generations of missionaries preparing for ministry in the Middle East.[21] 'It is my intention,' he wrote, 'to confute the principal obscenities of this deceitful law, and to give the occasion to other brothers, that they might be able to call the followers of this great deceit back to God.'[22]

Riccoldo's approach towards Islam was primarily polemical. Recalling his own experience in Baghdad, he informed his readers that before engaging in a religious debate one should know Muslims only acknowledged the Qur'ān to be the word of God. He therefore suggested that one initiate inter-religious dialogues or disputes by attacking the source and root of their religion, 'for one cannot inculcate virtues before extirpating vice.'[23] The *Contra legem Sarracenorum* was to be a model and reference for such an approach. It consisted of a wealth of evidence drawn out of the Qur'ān, alongside references to other Islamic sources, to show that it was not the word of God. Not only did former revelations, the Old and New Testaments, fail to attest to it, but it also contradicted them stylistically, in manner of speech, and doctrine. Moreover, he argued, it contradicted itself, was not verified by miracles, was irrational, disorderly and wicked, contained obvious falsehoods, condoned violence, and, finally, had a dubious textual history.[24] Then, following the attack, Riccoldo shifted to an apologetic, suggesting that mission-

---

[19] Berthold Altaner, *Die Dominikanermissionen des 13. Jahrhunderts: Forschungen zur Geschichte der kirchlichen Unionen und der Mohammedaner und Heidenmission des Mittelalters* (Habelschwerdt: Frankes Buchhandlung, 1924), 5.

[20] Daniel, *Islam*, 22. In addition to its wide dissemination after it was printed in 1500 and several times thereafter, attesting to its popularity in the Middle Ages, there are twenty-eight extant medieval manuscripts of the *ClS* scattered throughout Europe. See Jean-Marie Mérigoux, 'L'ouvrage d'un Frère Prêcheur Florentin en Orient à la Fin du XIIIe Siècle. Le *Contra legem Sarracenorum* de Riccoldo da Monte di Croce', *MD* 15 (1986), 35–38.

[21] L. Michael Spath, '*De Lege Sarracenorum* according to Riccoldo da Monte Croce', *BRIIFS* 2:2 (2000), 116.

[22] *ClS*, 63.66–69: '[E]st mea intentio … confutare principales obscenitates tam perfide legis, et dare occasionem aliis fratribus, per quem modum possunt facilius reuocare ad Deum sectatores tante perfidie.'

[23] *ClS*, 68.12–14, trans. Tolan, *Saracens*, 251–252.

[24] These points are summarised at *ClS*, 66.73–67.86 and 136.5–9 and substantiated in chapters 3 through 13.

aries should attempt to demonstrate the veracity of fundamental Christian dogmas by extracting them from the Qur'ān itself.[25] Passages with God speaking in the first person plural could be used to show the existence of a plurality within the Godhead. Others such as the first half of Qur'ān 4:171, he suggested, ascribed a divine nature to Christ and the Holy Spirit. Furthermore, he continued, it could also be argued that because Muḥammad praised the Torah (*Tawrāt*) and Gospel (*Injīl*) Muslims should hold them as authorities.[26] From here, confident that once a Muslim read any of the Gospels, he concluded that the superiority of Christ over Muḥammad would be obvious and Muslims would be compelled to convert or, as he put it, partake in 'the banquet of truth.'[27]

While Riccoldo's acquaintance with the Muslim world is obvious, equally apparent is his disdain for Islam. In chapter 1, he described the content of the Qur'ān as the refuse (*feces*) of all the ancient heresies simultaneously vomited up through Muḥammad,[28] and catalogued them one by one: with Sabellius, it denied the Trinity; with Arius and Eunomius, it reduced Christ to a mere creature; with Carpocrates, it posited that Christ could not have been God's son for God does not have a wife; with the Jews and the Cerdonians, it claimed that if Christ were equal to God the world would be in danger for schisms would arise between the Father and the Son; with the Manicheans, it denied the crucifixion of Christ. Similar to the Donatists, it denied the efficacy of the sacraments as a result of Christ's passion because it denied the very passion itself; along with Origen, it asserted that demons (a reference to the *jinn*) are capable of being saved by becoming Muslims; in agreement with Macedonius, it treated the Holy Spirit as a creature; and, finally, its liberal attitude towards polygamy and sex ran parallel to

[25] See Spath's treatment of these two chapters in connection with the rest of the treatise in '*De Lege Sarracenorum*', 118–135.

[26] Riccoldo was well aware of the charge that both had been corrupted (*taḥrīf*), but was quite confident he had shown this to be an untenable allegation (see *ClS*, 72.37–76.137).

[27] *ClS*, 125.3–5: 'Consequenter mouenda sunt quedam dubia in Alchorano et quedam questiones de quibus, cum Saraceni non poterunt reddere rationem, non solum inuitentur sed compellantur intrare ad conuiuium ueritatis.'

[28] *ClS*, 63.4–6: 'Et sciendum quod omnium antiquorum hereticorum feces quas diabolus in aliis sparsim seminauerat, simul in Machometum reuomuit.' Peter of Cluny had said the same thing in *Summa totius haeresis Saracenorum*. See text in Kritzeck, *Peter the Venerable*, 207: 'Inter ista, omnes pene antiquarum heresum feces, quas diabolo imbuente sorbuerat, reuomens, cum Sabellio trinitatem abnegat, cum suo Nestorio Christi deitatem abicit …'

the hedonistic teachings of the Nicolatian heretics. From this, Riccoldo thought it should be clear to his readers that Muḥammad was a *homo diabolicus* and Islam a *legem mendacissimam*.[29]

Riccoldo's *Contra legem Sarracenorum* is without a doubt one of the most important apologetic works written in response to Islam during the Middle Ages. In 1360, as the Ottoman Turks began making their way towards Constantinople, the Byzantine theologian Demetrios Kydones (c. 1324–1398) translated it into Greek for Emperor John Kantakouzenos (c. 1342–1354).[30] It was also used by his son's successor Emperor Manuel Palaiologos II (c. 1391–1425) for his dialogues with Turkish Muslim leaders.[31] In 1506, it was translated back into Latin for King Ferdinand (1452–1516) of Aragon and Sicily, not to aid in responding to any potential Christian-Muslim theological encounters but to help 'understand' Islam. 'Once you have carefully read this confutation of brother Richard,' the translator wrote, 'then you will learn for the first time how empty this religion is, how worthless, how lacking in substance, and how it has nothing of importance to say for our present day.'[32] Some have deemed it 'the finest piece of anti-Moslem polemic in the Middle Ages.'[33] Critical scholarship, however, is quick to point out its deficiencies, particularly its distorted portrayal of Islamic teachings.[34] Nevertheless, Riccoldo's *Contra legem Sarracenorum* remained a standard polemic (and textbook on Islam) for centuries to come.

Apart from using the *Contra legem Sarracenorum* itself, the information contained within it was also consulted by other apologists to compose even more anti-Islamic works. For example, the Spanish Franciscan Alfonso de Espina (c. 1412–1464) used it for the fourth book in his massive inquisitorial compendium *Fortalicium fidei Iudeos Saracenos*

---

[29] *ClS*, 62.44, 46.

[30] Mérigoux, 'L'ouvrage', 51–53; cf. Benjamin Kedar, *Crusade and Mission: European Approaches toward the Muslim* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984), 200n142.

[31] Manuel Palaiologos, *Dialogue mit einem Muslim*, trans. and ed. Karl Förstel (Würzburg: Echter and Altenberge: Oros, 1995), 1: xx.

[32] *CA*, WA 53:275.9–11: 'Quae quam vana sit, quam friuola, quam nullius momenti, in praesentiarum nihil attinet dicere, quoniam eam tunc primum intelleges, cum hanc Richardi fratris confutationem diligenter lectitaueris.' Cf. Mérigoux, 'L'ouvrage', 53–54.

[33] James Thayer Addison, *The Christian Approach to the Moslem: A Historical Study* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1942), 39; cf. James Sweetman, *Islam and Christian Theology*, vol. 1 part 2 (London: Lutterworth Press, 1955), 116.

[34] Most recently, see L. Michael Spath, '*De Lege Sarracenorum*', 115–140. Also see pages 198–200 below.

aliosque christiae fidei inimicos.[35] His work offered an impressive description of Muslim history, religious and cultural customs, a comparative study and critique of Islamic theological doctrines, described by Anna Echevarria as 'one of the best works … in his time',[36] and a catalogue of Muslim polemics against Christianity. These were all meant to agitate Christians, which in Alfonso's mind was not necessarily best expressed in religious debate but in a crusade against Islam. He even argued towards the end of the book that the place to begin holy war against the Muslims anew was Spain.[37] He thus insisted that Christians needed to take up arms and finish expunging the Saracen powers from the Iberian Peninsula or, at the very least, he argued, force them into a state of perpetual servitude.[38]

Another apologist who also used Riccoldo's work to his own ends was the famous Carthusian monk Dionysius (1402–1471).[39] Whereas his contemporary Alfonso was interested primarily in informing his readers about Islam in order to incite them to war, Dionysius retained some of Riccoldo's missionary enthusiasm. At the same time, however, he did encourage crusades, not so much against the remaining Muslims in Spain but against the Ottoman Turks, who, shortly before he wrote his massive *Contra Alchoranum & sectam Machumeticam*, had conquered Constantinople.

Dionysius's method was quite different from Riccoldo's. Rather than attempting to use the Qur'ān against itself as the Dominican apologist did he instead cited passage after passage of the Qur'ān, which was then countered by a biblical quotation. In the fifth part of his book he placed these Qur'ānic theses and their biblical antitheses in the mouths of a Christian and a Saracen in what must almost certainly be taken as a fictitious dialogue. After the debate ended the latter admitted to being shaken up by the former's arguments, to which the Christian responded

---

[35] For biographical details, see Echevarria, *Fortress*, 47–55.

[36] Echevarria, *Fortress*, 209. For further details on the *Fortalitium fidei*'s description of Islam, see pages 101–170 in Echevarria's work.

[37] Alfonso de Espina, *Fortalicium fidei contra Iudeos Saracenos aliosque christiae fidei inimicos* (Nürnberg: Koberger, 1485), K1^{r}-K3^{r}.

[38] Alfonso, *Fortalicium*, K3^{v}-K5^{r}. On the proposed legal prescriptions for Muslims remaining in Spain after the reconquest was over, see *Fortalicium*, K3^{r}. Echievarria notes that the *Fortalicium fidei* 'would become one of the favourite manuals of the Inquistion in the following century' (*Fortress*, 4).

[39] For a brief biography, see *ODCC*, 486.

by inviting the Muslim to embrace his religion.[40] Confident that he had successfully refuted Islam, Dionysius then, following traditional crusade propaganda, built a case for a *bello adversus Turcas*. Invoking the authority of Abbot Bernard of Clairvaux (1090–1153), he urged the emperor to wage war against the Turks and even furnished 'proofs' in the form of visions that he had received from God foretelling the success of the Christian armies.[41]

While Alfonso and Dionysius sharpened Riccoldo's polemical attack against the Qurʾān, one of his most distinguished readers, the German humanist Cardinal Nicholas of Cusa (1401–1464), took a different route in his celebrated *Cribratio Alkorani* (1461).[42] Similar to Riccoldo, he wanted to provide enough apologetic weaponry to show 'that the Muḥammadan sect … is in error and is to be repudiated.'[43] Nicholas's tone, however, is quite different. The former, at the outset of his work, identified Muḥammad as a Satan-inspired imposter; Nicholas, at least superficially, acknowledged that the Arabian prophet was well intentioned and tried his best to point the way to God, a way, he claimed, before the time of Muḥammad 'Christ illumined and perfected.'[44] Further, unlike Riccoldo who sought to refute the 'heresy and errors of Muḥammad' even before attempting to extol the Christian faith to Muslims, he informed his reader(s) that he applied his mind solely 'to disclosing, even from the Qurʾān, that the Gospel is true.'[45] He even asserted that there were many points of agreement between it and the Bible: 'A comparison of the law of Christ with the law of Muḥammad will teach that both of these must believed to be true.' While he did not consider the Qurʾān authoritative in a formal theological sense,[46] he did believe that God had inserted some truth into it.[47] Therefore, he was certain that if a Muslim read the Qurʾān using his hermeneutic, which he called a *pia interpretatio*, it would be clear to them that they must con-

---

[40] Dionysius the Carthusian, *Contra Alchoranum & sectam Machometicam* (Köln: Quentel, 1533), Mm4^{v}.

[41] Dionysius, *Contra Alchoranum*, Nn6^{r}.

[42] In his preliminary discussion on the sources that he consulted, Nicholas noted that Riccoldo's *ClS* was 'more gratifying than the others' (*CrA*, 966).

[43] *CrA*, 965.

[44] *CrA*, 967.

[45] *CrA*, 966.

[46] *CrA*, 968. This is clear from the title of book 1 chapter 1: 'On the Koran. That the true God is not its author.'

[47] *CrA*, 999.

fess the doctrine of the Trinity and, from that, the deity of Christ.[48] He did this, as the title's words indicate, by sifting through the text, keeping an eye out for any passage that contained the first person plural when God spoke or whenever superhuman characteristics were attributed to Christ.

Nicholas's somewhat new approach to Islam has been admired even into the present day. Some churchmen have described it as an 'enlightened approach' toward inter-religious dialogue.[49] Even the normally very critical scholar Norman Daniel described him as the 'most remarkable man' of the fifteenth century, with the following qualification: his 'intentions are the best, and he is a real ecumenist, but he is not an Arabist, and he is not interested to find out more about Islam.'[50] This is especially clear with his use of the Qur'ān. Rather than seeking out a legitimate Muslim exegesis of the text, Nicholas attempted to force the Qur'ān into a Procrustean bed of Christian theology. Nevertheless, in addition to fuelling the pope's resolve against Islam, as he wrote in the dedicatory epistle of the work, like Riccoldo he would be a common source for future polemicists who attempted to refute Islam.[51]

There were, of course, a whole host of other authors who devised their own unique approaches to Islam.[52] One such figure who stands out for his comprehensive knowledge of Islam and logical rigour was Ramon Llull (1235–1315). He was very critical of the approach to Islam that Riccoldo and others took and proposed a more irenic response 'so that there would be no more rancour or ill will among men, who hate

---

[48] *CrA*, 1025. Nicholas alters Riccoldo's method here. Riccoldo thought that the Qur'ān did not necessary contradict a plurality of persons in the one essence of the Godhead (cf. *ClS*, 127.69–128.98) whereas Nicholas thought that, through his devout interpretation of the text (and philosophical argumentation), he could show that it actually propagated the notion of the tri-unity of God. On the philosophical background to Nicholas' approach to the Trinity and inter-religious dialogue, see Ludwig Hagemann, *Der Kur'ān in Verständnis und Kritik Bei Nikolaus von Kues: Ein Beitrag zur Erhellung islāmisch-christlicher Geschichte* (Frankfurt am Main: Josef Knecht, 1976), 73–74, 79–83.

[49] James Biechler, 'Christian Humanism Confronts Islam: Sifting the Qur'an with Nicholas of Cusa', *JES* 13 (1976), 8. Also see his 'A New Face toward Islam: Nicholas of Cusa and John of Segovia' and Thomas Izbicki, 'The Possiblity of Dialogue with Islam in the Fifteenth Century', in Gerald Christianson and T. Izbicki (eds.), *Nicholas of Cusa: In Search of God and Wisdom* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1991), 187, 176 (respectively).

[50] Norman Daniel, 'The Image of Islam in the Medieval and the Early Modern Period', in Azim Nanji (ed.), *Mapping Islamic Studies: Geneology, Continuity and Change* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1997), 139–140.

[51] Both Nicholas's *CrA* and Riccoldo's *CA* were included in the 1543 *Machumetis*.

[52] See Tolan, *Saracens*, 214–255; Sweetman, *Islam*, 104–111.

each other because of diversity and contrariness of beliefs and of sects!' Ramon was convinced that, since Muslims and Christians would not 'agree by means of authorities', some sort of concord could be reached 'by means of demonstrative and necessary reasons.'

> Just as there is only one God, Father, Creator, and Lord of everything that exists, so all people could unite and become one people, and that people be on the path to salvation, under one faith and one religion, giving glory and praise to our Lord God.[53]

In many of the 250 or so works that he composed in Latin, Catalan, and Arabic, he bypassed direct polemical engagements with the Qur'ān, and attempted to defend the superiority of Christianity on the grounds of pure reason.[54]

As irenic as Ramon Llull's apologetic was, he was also, particularly as he grew older, a staunch supporter of the crusade, and thought that military conquest should be used in order to aid in providing the setting for him and those trained in his method to engage Muslims in public debate. In the end, however, Llull rarely obtained any support from his contemporaries and, while his rejection of aggressive polemics and endorsement of rigorous logic might be admirable, his approach towards Islam did not gain nearly as many admirers as did the more aggressive attacks on Islam levied by Riccoldo, Alfonso, Dionysius and, to some extent, Nicholas.

Islam and the Apocalypse

Alongside the aggressive attacks of the apologists, perhaps the most enduring fixation medieval scholars had with the Muslim world was its place in the unfolding of history. The most influential figure in this aspect of Christian perceptions of Islam was the Abbot Joachim of Fiore (c. 1135–1202).[55] Although he never actively sought out information on

---

[53] *Libre del gentil e los tres savis*, cited in Tolan, *Saracens*, 264.

[54] See Tolan, *Saracens*, 256–274.

[55] Kenneth Setton, *Western Hostility towards Islam and Prophecies of Turkish Doom* (Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society, 1992), 7. Joachim was one of the most influential 'theorists in history' in general (Bernard McGinn, *Visions of the End: Apocalyptic Tradition in the Middle Ages* [New York: Columbia University Press, 1998], 126, 149–157; cf. Marjorie Reeves, 'The Originality and Influence of Joachim of Fiore', *Traditio* 36 [1980], 269–316).

its doctrine or developed any sort of apologetic,[56] he was fascinated with the emergence of Muḥammad and Islam out of seeming obscurity into the affairs of Eurasia, particularly as their history enmeshed with Judeo-Christian history.

History was, according to Joachim, divided into three overlapping periods, which he called states (*status*). The first began at creation with Adam, the second with King Uzziah (eighth century BC), which 'flourished under the Gospel', and the third at the time of St. Benedict (c. 480–550).[57] Within this conceptual periodisation of history he identified even more patterns that he thought were revealed in the Bible, particularly from John's Apocalypse. For example, the seven-headed dragon in chapter 12 suggested to him that the New Testament church's history was divided sevenfold, and each division corresponded to seven different human rulers and seven corresponding periods of persecution. The first was King Herod and the Jewish persecution of the church, and following Nero alongside the pagans and Constantius with the Arians, he identified the fourth ruler as Muḥammad accompanied by the Saracen-led persecution. Joachim himself was convinced that he was currently living during the time of the sixth ruler prophesied by the Apocalypse, who he identified as Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn (1138–1193). Concerning the events of this period, he cryptically wrote with further reference to the image of the seven-headed dragon of the Apocalypse:

> After that wound [to the sixth head of the dragon] which has already in some part begun, there will be victory for the Christians and joy for those who fear the name of the Lord at the casting down of that head of the beast over which the sixth king reigns and at its being brought almost to destruction and annihilation. Then after a few years its wound will be healed, and the king who is over it (whether it be Saladin if he is still alive or another in his place) will gather together a much larger army than before and will wage general war against God's elect. Many will be crowned with martyrdom in those days. In that time the seventh head of the dragon will also rise, the king who is called Antichrist and a multitude of false prophets with him.[58]

The victories of the first crusade, according to Joachim, marked the wounding of this sixth kingdom, but Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn's victory over the

---

[56] Kedar notes that he was still 'relatively well informed about Islam' (*Crusade and Mission*, 112).

[57] Joachim of Fiore, *Expositio in Apocalypsim*, trans. McGinn, in *Visions*, 134. Each of these three states were ascribed to the three persons of the Trinity.

[58] Joachim, *Expositio in Apocalypsim*, 137.

crusaders and re-conquest of Jerusalem in 1187 was a sign that it was being revived, which further indicated the imminent unveiling of the Antichrist with the Last Day following on his heels was soon approaching.[59]

Embedded within Riccoldo's *Contra legem Saracenorum* is a similar conception of the rise of Islam within (Christian) history. In the preface, the Dominican missionary divided the New Testament church's history into three 'states'. The first, he noted, extended from Christ's crucifixion up until the time of Constantine, lasting around 310 years during which time countless Christians were martyred at the hands of Jewish and pagan persecutors. The second period followed immediately afterwards, and was accompanied by a persecution of the church by its heretics—Arius, Sabellius, Macedonius, and others—who were called to a halt by the doctrinal and apologetic heroism of Saints Hilary (300–367), Augustine (354–430), Jerome (340–420), Gregory Nazianzus (325–389), and others he fails to list. Finally, the third period of the church began just after Pope Gregory I the Great (590–604), around the time of the Byzantine Emperor Heraclius (610–641), and it was marked by the rise of false brethren whose persecution of the church was to last indefinitely. The greatest of these false brethren was Muḥammad, the firstborn of Satan (*primogenitus sathane*). He composed a 'most deceitful and abominable law … as if [it was] a collection of the precepts of God' and with it his followers seduced a large part of the world.[60]

The Joachimist tradition of explaining Islam in relation to the apocalypse also secured itself in the later medieval biblical commentaries, particularly in the work of the Franciscan exegetes. For example, Nicholas of Lyra (1270–1349) and his critic Paul of Burgos (1351–1435), like Joachim, understood the Apocalypse as a record of church history—past, present, and future. Unlike Joachim, who saw the Apocalypse as suggesting several multi-layered and overlapping patterns, however, they both saw the text 'as a progressive history of the church from

[59] On Joachim's extremely complex thought with reference to Islam, see Marjorie Reeves, 'History and Prophecy in Medieval Thought', *MH* 5 (1974), 60–61; E.R. Daniel, 'Apocalyptic Conversion: The Joachite Alternative to the Crusades', *Traditio* 25 (1969), 132–135; Kedar, *Crusade and Mission*, 112–116; David Burr, 'Antichrist and Islam in Medieval Franciscan Exegesis', in John Tolan (ed.), *Medieval Perceptions of Islam: A Book of Essays* (New York: Garland Publishing, 1996), 131–135.

[60] *ClS*, 62.46–48: 'legem mendacissimam et nefariam composuit quasi ex ore Dei … quasi collectaneum preceptorum.'

the apostles in chapter 1 to the eschaton in chapter 22.'[61] Thus, while Joachim could identify Muḥammad and Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn with the dragon in chapter 12, both Nicholas and Paul identified Muḥammad and the emergence of Islam with the beast of the earth whose number was 666, which did not appear until chapter 13 (verses 11–18).[62] The subsequent chapters of the Apocalypse simply foretold a steady increase in the power of the Muslim world, but also its eventual demise.

In contrast with Nicholas, however, Paul was less antagonistic towards Islam. For him, Islam was essentially a mere historical accident and thus he made no attempts to specifically identify its decline and downfall from the pages of the Apocalypse. In fact, Paul was convinced that God might allow Islam to remain in the world for an indefinite amount of time. Contrary to what he perceived as an irrational fear of Islam in Nicholas, Paul was slightly more sympathetic to it, for unlike former persecutors of the church, he stated, Muslims were not idolaters. Nor did they attempt to lead Christians into apostasy under pain of death, but, rather, the Qur'ān forbade them from killing Christians (so long as they paid the tribute [*jizya*]).[63] He even noted that there were several instances in history where Christians and Muslims lived peacefully alongside each other, and, in addition, he added that although their Christology was faulty God surely tolerated their monotheism.

While Paul was by no means tolerant of Islamic theology, he did not perceive the Muslim world to be as much of an eschatological threat as Joachim or even Nicholas imagined it.[64] In stark contrast to Paul, however, the German Franciscan Johann Hilten (1425–1500) was quite antagonistic towards the Muslim Turks. Like his predecessors, he sought clues in the text of Scripture (and other 'prophets' such as Johann Lichtenberger[65]) in order to discern future events. He is perhaps

---

[61] Burr, 'Antichrist and Islam', 139.

[62] The dragon in 13:1 was the Persian King Khosroes and the beast from the sea in 13:1–10 was his son (Philip Krey, 'Nicholas of Lyra and Paul of Burgos on Islam', in John Tolan [ed.], *Medieval Perceptions of Islam: A Book of Essays* [New York: Garland Publishing, 1996], 165n8).

[63] *Additiones ad Postillam Nicolai de Lira super Biblia*, in Krey, 'Nicholas of Lyra', 171n36: 'Nam in Alchorano praecipitur, prout habetur in praedicto tractatu, quod omnes homines non recipientes legem suam occidantur, nisis soluant tributum.'

[64] For the subtle differences, see Burr, 'Antichrist and Islam', 131–156; Krey, 'Nicholas of Lyra', 153–174.

[65] See Dietrich Kurze, 'Popular Astrology and Prophecy in the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries', in Paolo Zambelli (ed.), 'Astrologi hallucinati': *Stars and the End of the World in Luther's Time* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1986), 177–193.

most remembered for his prediction of the decline of the papacy in 1516 and, implicitly, the emergence of a great Reformer, who was, of course, identified later on as Martin Luther.[66] In addition to this, as he lived during the time of Mehmet II, the Ottoman sultan who conquered Constantinople, he had numerous things to say about the Turks. From Daniel 7 and John's Apocalypse he predicted that they would eventually overrun Europe, establishing themselves as Gog and Magog in Germany and Italy by 1600. But after a while, he continued, there would be a mass conversion to Christianity and the destruction of Islam would soon follow. Islam was not the Antichrist, but the Antichrist would appear shortly after the fall of the Turkish Empire, but before 1651 when, he was sure, the world would come to an end.[67]

Whereas Europe's apologists and polemicists uncovered what they perceived as the theological errors of Islam its exegetes also revealed the diabolical nature behind the rise and persistent growth of the Muslim world. For Christians at this time the identification of Muḥammad and various other Muslim figures with bestial figures in the Bible was not mere speculation, for it explained why God had permitted them easy success in establishing Muslim hegemony in the Arabian Peninsula and then throughout the territories formerly, although loosely, controlled by Byzantium. Nevertheless, the influence of Muḥammad and Islam on medieval exegesis persisted into, and even beyond, the sixteenth century when explanations were sought for the seemingly endless victories of the Ottoman Turks.

Descriptive Accounts of the Muslim World

Along with the perpetual purveyance of apologetic and apocalyptic material on Islam, the late Middle Ages gave rise to descriptive eyewitness accounts of Muslim culture. One pilgrimage account in particular 'brought the world of the Levant into the homes of its readers.'[68] It was the work of a German traveller and Dean of the Cathedral at Mainz

---

[66] Philip Melanchthon, *Apologia Confessionis Augustanae*, in BELK, 377–378.

[67] See Paul Johansen, 'Johann von Hilten in Livland', *ARG* 36 (1939), 25; Otto Clemen, 'Schriften und Lebensausgang des Eisenacher Franziskaners Johann Hiltens', *ZKG* 47 (1928), 404; Robin Barnes, *Prophecy and Gnosis: Apocalypticism in the Wake of the Lutheran Reformation* (Stanford: Stanford University, 1988), 85, 98, 131.

[68] Robert Schwoebel, *The Shadow of the Crescent: The Renaissance Image of the Turk, 1453–1517* (New York: St Martin's Press, 1967), 191.

named Bernhard von Breydenbach (1440–1497) entitled *Peregrinationes in Terram Sanctam*. Based on his travels to the Holy Land, from which he returned around 1483, he published, in 1486, a detailed account of everything he saw on his journey east, including several fascinating sketches of the various cities and their inhabitants through which he travelled.

Towards the end of his narrative he also included a fairly extensive section on the peculiarities of Islam. Brief synopses of Muḥammad's life, the early Muslim community, and the contents of the Qurʾān were all provided, but rather than merely describing Muslim beliefs, Bernhard tried to convey that Muḥammad, the pseudo-prophet and first born of Satan (*pseudopropheta mahumet primogenitus Sathane*), was nothing more than a conniving heretic, who, with the help of other heretics, composed the Qurʾān in an effort to lead the world astray.[69] Although he described the sound of the Qurʾān being recited in Arabic as 'elegant', he did his best to show, by simply noting where it diverged from biblical teachings, that there was nothing original or virtuous contained in it.[70] Bernhard did indeed write very descriptively of the lands and events that he witnessed during his travels. When he described Islam, though, it is clear that he preferred polemics rather than the mere transmission of facts.[71]

While Bernhard secured and enjoyed free passage within the domain of Islam, Christians in the Balkans during the fifteenth century were not so fortunate, for they remained in the domain of war, which the Ottomans were seeking to incorporate into their rapidly expanding empire in what Bernard Lewis describes as the 'great *jihād par excellence*.'[72] Part of this westward expansion of the Turks included taking a significant amount of the population captive as slaves or servants of the sultan, and it was one of these captives, Georgius de Hungaria (1422–1502), who wrote one of the earliest descriptive accounts of life in Muslim Turkey.[73]

---

[69] Bernhard von Breydenbach, *Peregrinationes in Terram Sanctam* (Speyer: Drach, 1502), g3^{v}, g5^{r}.

[70] Bernhard, *Peregrinationes*, g5^{r}. From this, and the Arabic alphabet and glossary contained within (h4^{v}), it appears that he may have learned at least a little Arabic.

[71] See Daniel, *Islam*, 307, 404n3.

[72] Bernard Lewis, *Islam and the West* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), 10. On the *jihād* ideology of the Ottomans, see Linda Darling, 'Contested Territory: Ottoman Holy War in Comparative Context', *SI* 91 (2000), 133–163.

[73] The earliest account is probably Johann Schiltberger's *The Bondage and Travels of*

Georgius was taken captive in 1438 at the age of 16 while a student in Transylvania.[74] After twenty years of servitude he managed to escape—after eight previous attempts—to Christian lands where he then became a Dominican monk and eventually settled in Rome. Several years afterwards he penned, anonymously, his *Tractatus de moribus, condictionibus et nequicia Turcorum*, which was published for the first time in 1481 and is considered to be 'one of the most important if not the most important source for the *Lebensverhältnisse* in the Ottoman Empire in the fifteenth century.'[75] Martin Luther would, as will be shown below, consider it the greatest authority on Turkish culture in his time; therefore an extensive description of its image of the Ottomans is warranted.

The *Tractatus* is a lengthy treatise, containing 23 chapters, a preface, prologue, and three appendices (two Turkish poems with accompanying Latin translations and an excerpt of Joachim of Fiore's *Expositio in Apocalypsim*). It is riddled with Joachimist apocalyptic overtones, which, from the beginning, equated the 'horrible beast' of Apocalypse chapter 13 with the Ottoman Turks. From this, and since 'numerous Christians are denying faith in Christ' (*innumerabiles Christiani fidem Christi renegant*) on account of their deceitful religious teachings, Georgius decided to report everything he knew about them in order to forewarn Christians of the devious beliefs underneath the sublime appearances of their religious practices.[76]

He began his account by first tracing a brief history behind the emergence of Islam and the arrival of the Ottoman Turks in the Orient. 'According to all historians', he wrote, 'it is clearly known that the law of Muḥammad and the sect of the Saracens began around the seventh century during the time of Pope Boniface V [619–625] and Emperor Heraclius.'[77] Their power continued to increase. By 637 they

---

Johann Schiltberger, trans. J. Buchan Telfer (London: Hakluyt Society, 1879), especially 65–80.

[74] Georgius gives the year 1436 (*Tractatus*, 148). Scholarly consensus agrees that this is an 'Irrtum des Autors' (149n4) since he says that his capture occurred in 'obitu imperatoris Romanorum Sigismundi', which happened on 9 December 1437, and, also, Transylvania was raided by Turkish forces in 1438. Cf. J.A.B. Palmer, 'Fr. Georgius de Hungaria, O.P., and the *Tractatus de moribus condicionibus et nequicia turcorum*', *BJRL* 34 (1951/52), 45–46.

[75] Klockow, ed., *Tractatus*, 11; cf. Palmer, 'Fr. Georgius', 44.

[76] *Tractatus*, 144–148.

[77] *Tractatus*, 156: 'Secundum omnes historias scribentes aperte constat, quod lex Mechometi et secta Sarracenorum incepit circa annos domini sexcentesimos sub Bonifacio Quinto et Heraclio imperatore.'

had already conquered Jerusalem, and just before the time of Pope Leo IV (847–855) reached Rome, raiding the centre of Christendom in 846. Then, jumping ahead several centuries, when the Muslim world would again prove to be a threat to Europe, he explained the formation of the Turkish emirates by a great sultan (*Soldanus Magnus*), referring to the first Mamlūk Sultan Baybars (1260–1277). After naming all of the principalities (the *Othmanbeg, Ermenbeg, Germenbeg, Czarchanbeg, Andinbeg, Menthessebeg*, and *Karamanbeg*) and explaining how they quickly fell to Osman and the Ottomans, he wrote, 'Osman and his descendants … up to today are king and lord of all of Turkey. They have accomplished and daily accomplish so much not only in the East, but to be sure the West now fears them.'[78]

The remainder of the work described and assessed the danger Europe faced at the hands of the Ottomans and the Islamic religion. First, Georgius explained the apocalyptic nature of the threat, 'what has made this sect so great is evident in the image of Apocalypse 13.'[79] The beast with two horns like a ram but speaking like a dragon (13:11), he suggested, was the Turkish Empire, and its religion was the *ecclesie Antichristi*, which, working alongside its political machinery, sought the damnation of all men.[80] Indicative of this was the way in which they treated Christians. Chapters 5 through 8 described the harrowing experience of Christians under Ottoman-Islamic rule. For example, he recounted the ravaging and plundering of the Balkan towns by Turkish raiding forces, drawing specific attention to how many were taken captive for later sale in the slave markets. He even reported on the treatment they received at the hands of their Turkish masters in great detail, including the brutal and relentless punishments that were extended to those who tried to escape. On top of this, a lengthy description of the *devşirme* levy or system of enlisting Christian boys, converting them to Islam, usually through education, and then placing them in military and political service was also included in order to provide ample examples of the plight Christians faced under the Ottomans.[81]

---

[78] *Tractatus*, 160–162: 'Ille igitur Othmanbeg et posteri eius … usque hodie est rex et dominus totius Turcie, et in tantum profecit et cottidie proficit, ut non solum in orient, uerum etiam in occidente iam eius timor habeatur.'

[79] *Tractatus*, 168: 'quod tale fuisset inicium huius secte, apparet in figura apoc. xiiij.' This is apparently a misprint for he is clearly referring to Revelation 13 as he does, correctly, in the 3rd and 4th chapters (see pages 172 and 178).

[80] *Tractatus*, 162–168.

[81] *Tractatus*, 210.

Alongside the physical threat Christians faced Georgius also explained the greater danger—the threat of Christian apostasy—as well. This appears to be his greatest concern, for he included a lengthy analysis of what he thought were the motivating factors behind Christian conversion to Islam. At first, he suggested that the Turks appeared to have God's favour for they were continually awarded military success, which, according to the notion of God's providence, seemed to imply that he must approve of their religion. For those less inclined to metaphysical persuasion Georgius surmised that the second reason might be the stark contrast between Ottoman and European culture, which made the decaying *corpus Christianum* with all its political corruption and clerical abuses seem completely disgraceful. The sophisticated simplicity of Ottoman culture, of which he cited several examples ranging from their abstinence from alcohol to their disdain for anything remotely idolatrous, also contributed to the rising tide of conversion. Interestingly, Georgius also warned his readers that they should not think that the phenomenon of apostasy could be explained away as if only the ignorant converted. On the contrary, he wrote, it was 'not only the simple but also the wise' (*non solum simplicium, sed etiam sapientium*). He himself had witnessed a Franciscan and heard of a Dominican who had renounced their faith and embraced Islam.[82] Moreover, he almost succumbed to conversion (perhaps explaining why he published his work anonymously).

Before finishing up his description of the Turks, Georgius concluded with a discussion of the nature of the religion that was embraced by 'countless Christians.' He began his analysis by explaining how the *shahāda* was the cornerstone of their faith. After transcribing it in Turkish—*Layllaha hillallach mehemmet erczullach*—he translated it into Latin—*Deus est unus, et Mechometus est propheta eius maior*—and then explained that in spite of its pious language it was nothing but a ploy to cloak the false religion it adorned.[83] He also described how Muslims envisioned their religion in light of the previously revealed 'laws' of Christianity and Judaism. They confessed belief in all the prophets and books of God, he wrote, beginning with Moses and the Torah, followed by David and the Psalms, then Jesus and the Gospel, but then, on top of all this, they added Muḥammad and the Qur'ān, which they regarded

[82] *Tractatus*, 242–244.
[83] *Tractatus*, 254.

as the final and definitive law.[84] And the main requirement of 'this law', according to Georgius, was that one had to partake in the five daily prayers along with the remaining three pillars of Islam.

Apart from normal Islamic religious beliefs and practices, Georgius also included some very curious descriptions of the various dervish orders found throughout Turkey in the fifteenth century. There is a long, detailed narrative concerning the *Mevlevi* or whirling dervishes and examples of other sufi mystics, who, Georgius explained, by strength given from the Devil, performed miraculous feats such as remaining unaffected by the cold of winter even though 'they carry no clothes on the body, but run around naked covering only their penises.'[85] Another group, which he called the *Samitler* (*czamutlar*) and admitted that he had seldom seen, never spoke but appeared to receive continuous visions from God.[86] In any case, regardless of how appealing the beliefs and experiences of dervishes were Georgius immediately dismissed it, informing his readers that it was demonic and should not entice Christians.

The *Tractatus* is certainly a fascinating read. Apparently Christians living in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries thought so as well. Since its publication in 1481 up until 1550 there were at least seven manuscript copies, twelve different imprints, and eleven German translations in circulation.[87] It was a popular work indeed. Albrecht Classen explains the affect it had on its audience: 'Georgius provided his readers with popular material for their imagination to feed on, to correct their previous impressions, and to engender new discussions about the foreign world of the Ottoman Empire.'[88] Viewed against those works composed

[84] *Tractatus*, 256–258.

[85] *Tractatus*, 272: 'non portant exterius aliquem habitum, sed nudi incedunt, solum cooperientes uirilia.' His description of the whirling dervishes (see, especially, *Tractatus*, 278–287), according to Palmer, 'differs very little from what could be seen in a Mevlevi *tekke* twenty-five years ago and equally no doubt today' ('Fr. Georgius', 57). For a fuller description of the various dervish orders within the Ottoman Empire, see Ahmet Karamustafa, *God's Unruly Friends: Dervish Groups in the Later Middle Period, 1200–1550* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1994), 65–84; Antonia Zhelyazkova, 'Islamization in the Balkans as a Historiographical Problem: the Southeast-European Perspective', in Fikret Adanir and Suraiya Faroqhi (eds.), *The Ottomans and the Balkans: A Discussion of Historiography* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 2002), 256–258.

[86] *Tractatus*, 274.

[87] Albrecht Classen, 'The World of the Turks Described by an Eye-Witness: Georgius de Hungaria's Dialectical Discourse on the Foreign World of the Ottoman Empire', *JEMH* 7:3 (2003), 258; Klockow, ed., *Tractatus*, 52–72.

[88] Classen, 'Turks', 258.

before it, it is quite an intriguing work, for it accumulates the majority of perceptions and responses to Islam throughout the Middle Ages within its 281 pages. Nevertheless, along with the host of other works addressing Islam written during the years and centuries before the German Reformation, it would prove to be a primary source for Luther's study of Islam and the Turks.[89]

The authors and works surveyed above encompass only a small portion of the corpus of medieval literature on Islam. Yet, because information and attitudes tended to be passed around from one author to another, they also constitute a fairly comprehensive summary of the predominant perceptions of and approaches towards Islam from the middle of the twelfth up until the late fifteenth century.

Overall, Islam was viewed as a product of a conniving false prophet and son of Satan named Muḥammad. In fact, he was considered—at least metaphorically—to be the first born son of Satan, for he and his minions were all instrumental figures in the soon approaching apocalypse whereby God would in the end crush the Devil and his work and bring about an end to all of his enemies—Islam being one of the greatest. Even so, while the fate of Islam was sealed, it was still necessary to learn about and refute its doctrines, for in the case of Peter of Cluny and especially Riccoldo there was still hope, albeit slight, of rescuing Muslims from the error of their ways. For Alfonso, Dionysius, and, to some extent, Nicholas, Islam needed to be refuted primarily to justify and reinforce Christian commitment to the crusade. And for Georgius, one needed to be aware of Muslim doctrine and culture in order to avoid the shock of seeing how Christian culture paled in comparison to it.

All of the works surveyed in this chapter were available to interested individuals during the first half of the sixteenth century, not the least to Luther. They therefore served as fundamental sources from which authors could begin to learn about Islamic teachings and culture and, most importantly, how to respond to it. This was especially important for sixteenth-century authors, for as the Ottomans expanded westward so did the domain of Islam. And, as will be seen below, when Luther began his inquiry into the religion of the Turks he would use them (and others) in order to develop his own approach. They provided him

[89] See page 102 below.

with information to which he would never be privy, for he never once dialogued with a Muslim or came into contact with Islamic culture. But once he decided that Islam needed to be responded to theologically he had to use what he could obtain in order to begin his own polemical and apologetic writings against the Turks and their religion. Hence, the above sources are vital for understanding the background to Luther's perceptions and critiques of Islam.

CHAPTER TWO

THE TURKS AND ISLAM IN THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY

Islam—dressed in Turkish garb—was as big of a problem to sixteenth-century Europe as it was during the Middle Ages. Bernard Lohse even suggests that 'the history of Luther and of the Reformation must always be seen in this larger context.'[1] Following Mehmet the Conqueror's capture of Constantinople in 1453, three decades before Luther's birth, the momentum of Turkish conquests westward escalated, reaching their climax in the last years of Luther's life under Sultan Süleyman the Magnificent in the 1540s. The West's response was manifold as all sorts of solutions to the impending threat were proposed by a host of authors. Catholic writers called for a united crusade to reclaim Constantinople and, occasionally, the Holy Land. Humanists and early Protestants, in addition to approving and urging defensive war strategies, began to study the Ottomans and their religion; some even optimistically hoped to instigate a missionary enterprise among them. And the radical authors of the Reformation urged a pacifist response to Ottoman imperialism with a few expressing hope in a Turkish conquest of Europe. These and other writings from the era also expressed a multitude of attitudes towards and perceptions of Islam. While there was much diversity, a general European view of the Muslim Turks can still be surmised from them. Before narrowing in on Luther's writings, in order to establish the physical and literary context for his writings even further, this chapter will survey the major events and writings on the Turks and Islam in the late fifteenth and first half of the sixteenth century.

[1] Bernard Lohse, *Martin Luther: An Introduction to His Life and His Work*, trans. Robert Schultz (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1987), 4.

Ottoman Imperialism

A new era of Ottoman expansion began when Sultan Mehmet II (1451–1481) seized Constantinople. Although the old Byzantine capital was of little strategic importance, the ideological significance of its occupation was inestimable. Seemingly fulfilling prophecies dating back to Muḥammad which linked the conquest of the city to Islamic world domination, when Ottoman troops entered the city late in May of 1453 they had, in their minds, effectively established themselves as 'heirs to the imperial tradition as the conquered city once again became the capital of an extensive empire … not merely to eastern Rome but to a worldwide empire'—in fact, a Muslim empire.[2] And Mehmet himself was acknowledged by the Muslim world—at least the Sunnī Muslim world—to be the 'leader of Holy War against Christianity.'[3] From Constantinople, referred to after the conquest by the Turks as Islambul ('full of Islam') but officially Istanbul, he trained his sights on the Balkans. By 1478 Mehmet's forces had conquered nearly all of Greece and Albania and continued their expansion northwest along the southern bank of the Danube River, just short of Belgrade. Recognising the importance of Rhodes as a crusader stronghold, even into the late fifteenth century, and Rome as the centre of western Christianity,[4] rather than pushing farther north, he sent his naval commander Gedik Ahmet Paşa on a campaign in late 1479 to besiege Rhodes while another fleet continued towards Italy, landing and capturing the south-

[2] Stanford Shaw, *History of the Ottoman Empire and Modern Turkey*, vol. 1 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976), 55–61; cf. Albert Lybyer, *Constantinople as Capital of the Ottoman Empire* (Washington: American Historical Association, 1919), 384. On the roots of this ambition, see Osman Turan, 'The Idea of World Domination among the Medieval Turks', *SI* 4 (1955), 77–78.

[3] Shaw, *History*, 60–61. It must be noted, however, that Mehmet treated Christians within the empire rather favourably (59–60; cf. *Tractatus*, 224–226). He was even accused of being too tolerant by the Turkish nobility (66). Nevertheless, in addition to his aspirations to be the Roman Emperor Mehmet did see himself as perpetuating the *gazi* tradition against all infidel nations. See Halil İnalcik, 'The Rise of the Ottoman Empire', in P.M. Holt, Ann Lambton, and Bernard Lewis (eds.), *The Cambridge History of Islam*, vol. 1A (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970), 296; Norman Housley, *The Later Crusades, 1274–1580* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), 95–99.

[4] Rhodes was the only major Aegean Island that had not been captured by the Ottomans. The Knights Hospitalers controlled it since 1306 as a 'bastion against Islam' (Shaw, *History*, 69). On the Turks' perception of the significance of Rome, see Cemal Kafadar, 'The Ottomans and Europe', in Thomas Brady, Jr., Heiko Oberman, and James Tracy (eds.), *Handbook of European History, 1400–1600* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1994), 595–596.

ern city of Otranto on 11 August 1480. But shortly after Gedik Ahmet returned to Ottoman territory in order to round up more troops with plans on pushing up towards the Vatican, unfortunately for the Turks Mehmet the Conqueror died. And due to conflicts arising over his heir between the Sultan's two sons—Bayezit and Çem—the siege of Rhodes was ended and the base for future raids into Italy was abandoned as Franco-Italian crusading forces set sail to liberate the city.[5] The easy re-conquest of Otranto was followed by the news of Mehmet's death in the West, which brought about a sigh of relief to Europe but 'was followed by convulsions within the Ottoman Empire.'[6] Among other things, military and economic requirements necessary to support Mehmet's aggressive programme for expansion exceeded available resources. So it was up to his son Bayezit II (1481–1512), the new sultan, to consolidate and shore up the infrastructure of the empire until expansion could resume.

For the first two decades of his sultanate, Bayezit set out to correct his father's abuses of classical Islamic norms by 'reviving the institutions of orthodox Islam.'[7] He was also responsible for stabilising the tax system, rebuilding cities, equalising the influence of the military and nobility, building several new mosques, supporting religious education, and, perhaps most importantly for the future of Ottoman affairs, arming his troops with modern weaponry and building up the navy. Once these were accomplished, and his rival claimant for the throne, his brother Çem, was dead, he began to strategize for war against infidel Europe. At first he sought to take Belgrade while the Hungarians were busy warding off the Habsburg forces of Emperor Maximilian I, but he had to call off the attack due to fears of a Polish attack on Moldavia and the Black Sea coast. Bayezit began, instead, to provoke Venice by capturing several of its ports. Although the Ottoman navy proved superior, problems arising in the East amongst the Safavids of Persia caused him to agree, much to his imperialist chagrin, to a peace with Venice in 1503.[8] The ports that they had captured and retained,

---

[5] Shaw proposes that this ended 'what might have been an entirely new area of Muslim expansion' (*History*, 70). For the conflict between Bayezit and Çem, see, among others, Shaw, *History*, 67, 70–72; Dorothy Vaughan, *Europe and the Turk: A Pattern of Alliances* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1954), 84–86; S.N. Fischer, *The Foreign Relations of Turkey, 1481–1512* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1948), 49.

[6] Housley, *Crusades*, 112.

[7] Shaw, *History*, 72.

[8] Shaw, *History*, 77–78. For a recent lucid overview of the historical conflict and

however, proved to be strategically located for future advances in the Mediterranean and Europe and they, in turn, 'laid the foundations of Ottoman success.'[9]

Bayezit refused to deal decisively with the Shīʿa of Persia. This angered the sensibilities of the orthodox Ottomans, and led to his forced abdication in 1512. En route to his hometown of Demotica, with hopes of spending his final years in ascetic contemplation, he died (26 May 1512). The vision of global conquest was, nevertheless, realised again under his militant and politically astute son Selim I (1512–1520). Following the Turkish conviction that 'non-Turks had no longer any political part to play in the world of Islam',[10] after securing the western frontier by establishing various peace treaties with Europe, he turned his attention to the Persian Safavids in order to clean up where his father had failed. Temporarily securing peace with the Mamlūks to the south, he directed his military against the militant Shīʿa forces of the Safavid Shah Ismāʿil (1501–1524).[11] Although the Ottomans were met with considerable resistance, they managed to emerge victorious as they pushed past their eastern border into the valley of Çaldiran and, after defeating's Ismāʿil's forces, occupied the capital of Tabriz in 1514. Due to logistical problems and the soon-approaching winter, however, Selim had to lead his army back to Anatolia before he could return again to Persia. He was soon distracted by Shīʿa dissenters within the empire, though, so he could not complete his assault on the Safavids. In any case, after quelling Safavid sympathisers and securing Ottoman control of Anatolia, Selim turned southward and invaded Mamlūk territory in July of 1516. By April of 1517 he had moved through Syria down into Cairo, and extinguished the militant dynasty along with the shadow caliphate thereby incorporating the classical lands of Islam, including, and most importantly, the holy cities of Mecca and Medina, into the Ottoman Empire as well as assuming, *de facto*, the role as caliph of Islam.[12] His conquest 'made him the chief personage of all Muslims everywhere, and gave a religious foundation to his desire to bring them

---

antagonism between the Sunnīs and Shīʿa, see Vali Nasr, *The Shia Revival: How Conflicts within Islam Will Shape the Future* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2006), 17–80.

[9] Kafadar, 'Ottomans', 608. Cf. Fischer, *Foreign Relations*, 89. It also 'marked the entry of the Ottomans into European diplomacy as an increasingly important factor in the balance of power' (Shaw, *History*, 76).

[10] Turan, 'World Domination', 85.

[11] Shaw, *History*, 77–78, 80–82.

[12] Shaw, *History*, 84–85.

all under his sceptre and to conquer the rest of the world for Islām.'[13] The final two years of Selim's short but effective rule were devoted to revamping the internal structure of the Empire, which, in turn, served to solidify its foundations to pave the way for future imperial expansion.

Selim died on 21 September 1520 and was succeeded by his son Süleyman (1520–1566). Immediately, he instituted internal reforms in order to encourage economic growth and stabilise legal and administrative procedures of the Ottoman Empire.[14] Shortly thereafter, however, he turned to his primary ambition—the conquest of Europe. The city of Belgrade, with its great fortress blocking the way to the plains of Hungary, was his first target.[15] In August of 1521, Ottoman forces besieged and defeated the Serbian stronghold thus opening up the Danube to Hungary or what the Turks called the domain of the jihād.[16] Before moving any farther, though, he had to deal with revolts in Syria and Egypt (1521–1527) and the menace of the Knights Hospitalers working from the island of Rhodes (1522), who, after the failed attempt to annex it during Mehmet's day, had been tyrannising Turkish vessels in the eastern Mediteranean for years. By the spring of 1526 these distractions had been detained and the Ottoman army began marching into the independent kingdom of Hungary, meeting King Louis II (1506–1526) and his forces on the plains of Mohács.[17] But the Hungarians were no match for the Ottoman army and were quickly

---

[13] Lybyer, *Constantinople*, 385. For the significance of Selim's conquest of the Mamlūk dynasty to European history, see Andrew Hess, 'The Ottoman Conquest of Egypt (1517) and the Beginning of the Sixteenth-Century World War', *IJMES* 4/1 (1973), 55–76. The extension of the Ottoman domain into the Levant and the Arabian Peninsula also served to further secure the pre-eminence of the Turks in Mediterranean politics and economics by keeping, for a time, the Portuguese from monopolising the Persian Gulf and Red Sea. See Michel Mazzaoui, 'Global Policies of Sultan Selim, 1512–1520', in Donald Little (ed.), *Essays on Islamic Civilization* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1976), 224–243.

[14] Shaw, *History*, 87–88.

[15] For the circumstances surrounding its capture, see F. Szakály, 'Nándorfehérvár, 1521: The Beginning of the End of the Medieval Hungarian Kingdom', in Géza Dávid and Pál Fodor (eds.), *Hungarian-Ottoman Military and Diplomatic Relations in the Age of Süleyman the Magnificent* (Budapest 1994) 47–76.

[16] Allen Hertz, 'Muslims, Christians and Jews in Sixteenth-Century Belgrade', in Abraham Ascher, Tibor Halasi-Kun, and Béla Király (eds.), *The Mutual Effects of the Islamic and Judeo-Christian Worlds: The East European Pattern* (New York: Brooklyn College Press, 1979), 149.

[17] On Süleyman's strategy for taking Hungary, see Pál Fodor, 'Ottoman Policy towards Hungary, 1520–1541', *AOAH* 45 (1991), 271–345.

and easily cut down. Unimpeded, the Turks carried on from Mohács up the Danube to Buda and Pest, capturing both cities only ten days later.

The Ottomans now occupied most of Hungary with the exception of the northwestern Habsburg frontier. But, distracted again by a Shīʿa revolt in Anatolia, rather than annexing the buffer lands between the Ottomans and Habsburgs, Süleyman left Hungary in the hands of John Zapolya (1526–1540) in exchange for acknowledging Ottoman suzerainty and paying an annual tribute (24 September 1526).

Meanwhile, Emperor Charles V's (1519–1556) brother and future emperor Archduke Ferdinand I (1556–1564), who had previously formalised an alliance with Louis II (by marriage to his sister Anna), entered Hungary after Süleyman's departure, conquered most of it for the Habsburgs, and proclaimed himself king in December 1527. Zapolya immediately appealed to the Ottomans for help and, with the majority of Habsburg forces then preoccupied with war against France, the Turks invaded Hungary again, recapturing Buda and the majority of the remaining lands shortly thereafter. In September of 1529 they made their way up into Austria and besieged the city of Vienna from 27 September to 15 October. With winter fast approaching and the Austrians showing no sign of surrender, in spite of the considerable damage incurred upon the city, Süleyman decided to return to Istanbul. Before leaving, though, Turkish raiders had managed to cross the Alps into Bavaria and Bohemia, sending Germany into a panic. Had Süleyman pressed Vienna a little while longer, Shaw suggests, 'his forces might well have broken into Vienna, where they could have remained for the winter before pushing onward' into Germany.[18] A contemporary German account posits the same. Therefore, every Christian man and woman should praise and thank God for saving Germany, wrote Peter Stern, for if Vienna fell it would have been 'a gate and key to German lands' (*ein porten un schlüssel zu teutschen landen*).[19]

Less than a year after the first siege on Vienna Ferdinand invaded Hungary again, taking Buda on 23 December 1530. Although Süleyman wanted to focus on Ottoman affairs, he soon decided it would be expedient not only 'to restore the situation in Hungary but to destroy the German Empire and make it clear that the sultan of the Ottomans

[18] Shaw, *History*, 93.

[19] Peter Stern, *Warhafftige handlung Wie und welcher massen der Türck die stat Ofen und Wien belegert* (n.p., 1530), a2^{v}, c4^{r}; cf. Miller, 'Holy War', 66.

was the supreme ruler of all the world.'[20] He marched his army through Hungary up to Austria and sent raiders out in all directions hoping to draw the Habsburgs into open battle. But after they failed to attract any significant forces and it became clear to the Turks that they did not have enough time to take Vienna and move into Germany before winter, Süleyman pulled back. Not much was accomplished by way of expansion, but the Turks had shocked Austria and the Habsburgs by how far and wide they were able to penetrate into central Europe.

In any case, Süleyman and Ferdinand finally agreed to a cease-fire. Ferdinand was permitted to retain the northwestern Habsburg border of Hungary in exchange for an annual tribute as well as an agreement to cease dethroning the Ottoman puppet King Zapolya. While he had not annexed Hungary, by this action Süleyman assured a solid buffer between the two empires so that he could deal, again, with a Shī'a uprising and persecution of Sunnī Muslims in Anatolia and the Middle East inspired by Ismā'il's son Tahmasp (1524–1576). Moving from Persia and then south down through what is now Iraq, Süleyman extended the empire to the Persian Gulf and restored the primacy of orthodox Islam within its borders.[21]

Upon his return to Istanbul, after expanding and securing the eastern reaches of the empire, Süleyman renewed his campaigns in Europe. In 1538, he invaded Moldavia, establishing garrisons and Ottoman political influence there, although not annexing it. To the west, Zapolya, fearing Ottoman occupation and annexation of Hungary, had entered into a secret alliance with Ferdinand (at Grosswardein in 1538), dividing the rule of Hungary between the two and, since Zapolya did not have a male heir, guaranteeing Ferdinand complete authority upon his death. But King Sigismund I of Poland, also having ambitions for Hungary, shrewdly supplied Zapolya with his daughter Isabella, who gave birth to a son and an heir to the throne (Sigismund Janos). Matters reached a head in 1540. After Zapolya attempted to break the treaty of Grosswardein, in order to secure his son's right to succession, and then died on 22 August 1540, Ferdinand quickly invaded Hungary, promising that he would accept Ottoman suzerainty and pay an annual tribute of 50,000 to 100,000 gold gulden if permitted to retain his rule. Süleyman angrily rejected the offer and overan Hungary for the fourth time a

[20] Shaw, *History*, 94.
[21] Shaw, *History*, 95–96.

year later, driving out the Austrians and annexing all the lands south of the Danube.[22]

The Habsburgs were quick to respond as knights from all across Europe gathered to invade Ottoman Hungary by surprise. But forewarned by the French, who, along with Venice, were allied with the Turks, Süleyman was able to send enough forces to fortify Buda against Habsburg forces on 24 November 1542. After the winter, Süleyman responded in kind and began his fifth campaign on Hungary, capturing the remainder of the Habsburg forts and annexing nearly all of its lands. But then, after France had entered into an alliance with the Habsburgs at Crespy (18 September 1544), breaking their earlier agreement with the Ottomans, Süleyman, recognising a need to regroup and rethink his strategy, agreed to a truce with the Habsburgs (10 November 1545) and then a permanent peace in 1547 (13 June).[23] This was, of course, not the end of Ottoman-Habsburg conflict, but military battles between the two Empires virtually ceased, at least in Hungary, for over a decade.

Responses to Ottoman Imperialism and Islam

The fall of Constantinople in 1453 prompted fresh calls for a crusade from nearly every successive pope since Nicholas V's (1447–1455) initiative to recover the seat of the ancient Roman imperium shortly after its collapse.[24] Contemporaneous reports from the pontificate of Calixtus III (1455–1458), Nicholas V's militant successor, suggest that he was obsessed with going to war against the Turks.[25] His infatuation with the idea of a crusade received enough support to effectively deter Mehmet from taking Belgrade in 1456. By his death in 1458 he hoped to recover not just Constantinople but also the Holy Land whereupon he envisioned the beginnings of the destruction of Islam. Calixtus III's succes-

---

[22] Shaw, *History*, 102.

[23] Shaw, *History*, 102–103. Halil İnalcik attributes this more to pressures in Persia (*The Ottoman Empire: The Classical Age, 1300–1600* [New York: Praeger, 1973], 37).

[24] On 30 September 1453 he issued *Etsi ecclesia Christi* calling Europe to a crusade against the Turks. This was followed by perhaps the earliest example of a German *Türkenbüchlein* entitled *Eyn manung der cristenheit widder die durken* (1455), which addressed various religious and secular officials throughout the Empire, exhorting them to unite against the Turks (Schwoebel, *Shadow*, 166–167).

[25] See Kenneth Setton, *The Papacy and the Levant* (Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society, 1976) 2:164; Housley, *Crusades*, 102–103.

sor, Pius II (1458–1464), seems to have been just as voracious in his call for holy war. In fact, crusade scholar Norman Housley has dubbed him 'the greatest crusade pope since Gregory X.'[26] In order to show how necessary he thought a united front against the Ottomans was Pius volunteered to lead a crusade himself.[27] His plans were put into motion and, true to his word, Pius set out in June 1464, despite his failing health, to meet up with Hungarian forces in Ancona, Italy. In August, while waiting for the Venetian fleet to arrive, he died, and the crusade with him, although there were some attempts and even some victories against the Turks in Albania as well as successful defensive battles along the Danube frontier.

Both Popes Paul II (1464–1471) and Sixtus IV (1471–1484), after Pius, funded Hungarian ground forces and Venetian naval fleets so that they could continue to ward off Turkish troops south of the Danube and in the Mediterranean.[28] Especially in 1480, when the Turks besieged Otranto and Rhodes, Sixtus pleaded that the secular powers take up arms immediately as he planned to flee northward.

> How perilous it has become for all Christians, and especially the Italian powers, to hesitate in the assumption of arms against the Turks and how destructive to delay any longer, everyone can see … And so if the faithful, and especially the Italians, want to keep their lands, homes, wives, children, liberty, and the very faith in which we are baptized and reborn, let them believe us that they must now take up arms and go to war.[29]

The crusading armies that heeded the pope's call easily defeated what few Turkish forces were left in Otranto and Rhodes. Unaware that the lack of Ottoman resilience was due to a power vacuum in Istanbul left behind after Sultan Mehmet's death, the easy recapture was taken as a sign by Sixtus that destiny was on their side. Thus he reasoned that if the European powers, especially Hungary and Italy, began to push towards Istanbul, the Christians, with God fighting on their side, would finally be victorious over the Turks.[30]

---

[26] Housley, *Crusades*, 104–106.

[27] Housley, *Crusades*, 107.

[28] For the system of fortresses built from papal money up until Luther's day, see Géza Pálffy, 'The Hungarian-Habsburg Border Defence Systems', in Géza Pálffy and Pál Fodor (eds.), *Ottomans, Hungarians and Habsburgs in Central Europe: The Military Confines in the Era of Ottoman Conquest* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 2000), 3–33.

[29] Setton, *Papacy*, 2:364.

[30] Housley, *Crusades*, 112. The Turks were withdrawing from both places thus enabling an easy victory (Shaw, *History*, 70).

However much Sixtus and his successor Innocent VIII (1484–1492) advocated for the crusade, though, it typically fell upon deaf ears until Maximilian I (1493–1519) of the house of Habsburg was crowned Emperor. A unified crusade against the Turks finally appeared to be a very real possibility.[31] Emperor Maximilian sought to expand the borders of his empire into Hungary (and perhaps as far as Constantinople), and to expel the infidel away from Christendom. Initial requests for monetary and military support from the German *Reichstag* were rejected so the papacy had to provide most of the support, the funds for which were obtained by Pope Alexander VI (1492–1503) by levying a universal tithe in the bull *Quamvis ad amplianda* (June 1500).[32] Crusade optimism came to a halt, though, when Venice and Hungary established a temporary peace with the Ottomans in 1502 and 1503 (respectively).

After Alexander died and his successor Pius III only spent a month as pontiff before his untimely death, Julius II (1503–1513) was elected Pope based on the condition that he would continue to push for a holy war against the Turks (and would restore unity and order to the church by a General Council).[33] By 1506 he began speaking of uniting the European powers in order to re-conquer Constantinople and then Jerusalem. Finally, proceding cautiously, on 18 July 1511 he issued a bull announcing the meeting of a Church Council at the Lateran Palace to be held beginning in April of the following year. Among the items on the agenda was the unification of Europe to 'prosecute a holy war against the Turks.'[34] The first session of the Council assessed the danger that the Turks posed to Europe with the Archbishop of Spalato surmising:

> Within the confines of Europe they have usurped no mean dominion with the effusion of much Christian blood. They could easily transport themselves to the gates of Rome in the space of one night from their domain in Dalmatia … Not one among them has learned respect for

[31] On Maximilian's advocacy of the crusades, see Housley, *Crusades*, 113; Schwoebel, *Crescent*, 156, 216; John Bohnstedt, 'The Infidel Scourge of God: The Turkish Menace as Seen by German Pamphleteers of the Reformation Era', *TAPS* 56:9 (1968), 9; Stephen Fischer-Galati, *Ottoman Imperialism and German Protestantism, 1521–1555* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1959), 9–10.

[32] Max Kortepeter, 'The Turkish Question in the Era of the Fifth Lateran Council (1512–1517)', in Donald Little (ed.), *Essays on Islamic Civilization* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1976), 158–159; Fischer-Galati, *Imperialism*, 4–12.

[33] Kortepeter, 'Turkish Question', 157.

[34] Kortepeter, 'Turkish Question', 159.

> the female sex, for the piety of youth, or compassion for the aged … They snatch children from the arms of their parents and infants from the breast of their mothers; they violate wives in front of their husbands, they snatch virgins from the embrace of their mothers in wild lust, they cut down aged parents as though useless, in full view of their children; they yoke youths to the plough as if they were oxen and they destroy the cultivated land.[35]

In accordance with this horrific assessment, Maximilian established an alliance with the papacy for the purpose of attacking the Turks on 3 December 1512, but, as was the case in previous attempts, crusade optimism died when the chief instigator, Pope Julius, died two months later.

Julius was succeeded by the pope who eventually excommunicated Luther, Pope Leo X (1513–1521). Upon assuming the pontificate, he was sent a booklet enitled *Libellus ad Leonem Decimum*, which offered extensive suggestions for dealing with the Turks. In short, it claimed that if he preached the crusade the political and ecclesiastical leaders throughout Europe would unite in order to 'turn their arms against the impious enemies of our faith.'[36] By the end of the Fifth Lateran Council Leo had resolved to do everything within his power to do just this, and thus he established the *fraternitas Sanctae Cruciatae* to calculate the cost.[37] Plans were put into action over the next three years, as the papacy began to accumulate wealth and the various European rulers assembled armies, but when Selim died in 1520 everything went to nought for it was rumoured that his successor, Süleyman, would prove to be much less of a problem to Europe. The contemporary Italian historian Paolo Giovio (1483–1552) and early modern Ottomanist wrote of him, '[he] has neither the talent nor the will to continue down the road of the conquerors as his father; he is a child without experience and high ability, a soft, peace-loving personality that thinks little about war and the glory of arms, a lamb that follows the lion.'[38]

This, of course, proved to be utterly false, for Süleyman would show himself to be the most capable of all the Ottoman sultans. Furthermore, unfortunately for Europe, when it became clear that they had a formidable foe on their hands internal divisions within Europe—

---

[35] Kortepeter, 'Turkish Question', 162–163.

[36] Setton, 'Pope Leo X and the Turkish Peril', *PAPS* 113 (1969), 371.

[37] Setton, 'Leo X', 402–403; Kortpeter, 'Turkish Question', 170–171; Housley, *Crusades*, 125–126.

[38] Miller, 'Holy War', 55.

many caused by the nascent protestant revolts—provided an increasingly problematic barrier to any realisation of a joint effort against the Turks. Nevertheless, throughout the course of the following decades attempts were made to levy support for a crusade by subsequent popes, but none as intense as those that were planned during the Fifth Lateran Council.[39]

There are several documents that illustrate the proclivities of the sixteenth-century crusade enthusiasts.[40] One in particular, *Das ist ein anschlag eyns zugs wider die Türckenn, Vnnd alle die wyder den Christenlichen Glawbenn seyndt*, which was printed at least six times in 1518 and also appeared periodically under four different titles over the following decades, will sufficiently demonstrate the character of these tracts.[41] To begin with, the author (probably a Franciscan monk) naïvely envisaged an assault and conquest of the Turks, their conversion to Christianity, and the re-conquest of the Holy Land in less than a year. 'I hope to God Almighty that we will, in a short year, [have] the Holy Sepulchre and the Turkish dog under us Christians and bring them to the Christian faith.'[42] To accomplish this, he laid out the financial and personnel requirements necessary for the task. If one monk from each Franciscan monastery was set aside for an army, 36,000 soldiers could be accumulated, but if the Dominicans, Augustinians, Carmelites, and others also contributed the same an army of nearly 140,000 men could be gathered. Still further, if the laity and clergy joined in, an army of half a million could set out for a general crusade, he suggested. With regard to finances, he estimated that if every monk contributed one penny per week, in a week's time some 14,400 pence would be collected each week from the cloisters alone. This would amount to an annual amount of 748,800 Hungarian gulden. Add a general taxation on top of that, not counting higher taxes on Jews and the generosity of wealthy people,

---

[39] See Housley, *Crusades*, 126ff.

[40] See Bohnstedt, 'Scourge', 9, 17, 35–36; Miller, 'Holy War', 259–269.

[41] Setton notes that this tract was printed as early as 1474 ('Leo X', 414n180). See bibliographical information in Carl Göllner, *Turcica: Die europaischen Turkendrucke des XVI. Jahrhunderts*, 2 vols. (Bucuresti, Editura Academiei, 1961), 1:105–109; K.M. Kertbeny, *Ungarn betreffende deutsche Erstlings Drucke, 1454–1600* (Budapest: Universitats-Buchdruckerei, 1881), 129–136.

[42] *Ain anschlag wie man dem Türcke widerstand thun mag und durch gantz christenhait baide von gaistliche un weltliche stant geleyche bürde getrage würde on beschwernis mit ordenung der müntz gar schön zulesen yetz new gedruckt* (n.p., 1522), b2^{r}: 'Hoff ich zu got den almechtig wir wolten in kurzen iaren d[a]z haylig grab und die Türkische hund under uns christen unnd zu dem christlichen gelauben bringen.'

nearly 20 million gulden could be raised each year, 19,468,092 to be precise, according to the author's calculations. In the end, the *Anschlag* reckoned that five armies consisting of 50,000 men in each would be sufficient to accomplish a successful crusade on the Ottoman-Muslim world.

As catholic authors continued to push for a general crusade against the Turks, the Protestants (theologians and secular officials) vowed only to lend their support to a defensive war. The Germans had for some time been reluctant to offer any military aid to the Habsburgs especially when it was clear that Rome was involved, for it was thought that appeals to raise support for the imperial forces was simply a papal scam to rob the nobility of their wealth. After all, the Turks under Bayezit and Selim did not pose a serious threat to Germany.[43] Even when Süleyman began his expansion into Hungary, taking Belgrade in the same year that the new Emperor Charles V's brother Ferdinand became *Staathalter* of Germany (1521), appeals for aid from Germany were basically ignored Diet after Diet.[44] The German nobility considered the domestic affairs of the empire a more pressing problem than the Ottoman army, and so when Hungarian emissaries arrived at the Diet of Worms in 1521 pleading for aid they too were all but ignored as the gathering seemed devoted to dealing with Luther. As Luther's reform gained momentum and several princes and their cities came under his influence, German laxity over the Turkish danger was even used by the secular officials to the advantage of the Reformation movement.[45] There were theological reasons, however, for failing to lend support to the Habsburg-papal cause against the Turk as well.

Erasmus and Luther's followers, grappling with the issue of the legitimacy of warfare, not only destroyed catholic Europe's centuries old approach to the Muslim world; they also gave rise to protestant conceptions of just war. The basis for rejecting crusade ideology was that

---

[43] Men like the German nationalist and humanist scholar Ulrich von Hutten (1488–1523), however, appealed to the German nobility for imperial support, arguing that although the threat had subsided since the time of Mehmet the Turks still constituted a serious threat to the German Empire and the Christian religion. See Fischer-Galati, *Imperialism*, 10; Schwoebel, *Shadow*, 218–219.

[44] See Fischer-Galati, *Imperialism*, 5–11.

[45] See Fischer-Galati, *Imperialism*, 13–96. Hence, the Ottomans are often referred to as the 'ally of the Reformation.' See, among others, V.J. Parry, 'The Ottoman Empire, 1520–1566', in G.R. Elton (ed.), *New Cambridge Modern History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1958), 2:207; Vaughan, *Europe*, 134. Cf. Miller's criticism ('Holy War', 283).

it simply was not the church's business to engage in warfare at all. Nor was it the duty of the emperor to defend the church. It was the duty of the church and clergy, according at least to the Lutherans, to preach the gospel and administer the sacraments whereas secular officials and rulers were to ensure that peace and liberty was maintained for their citizens. Thus, Christians (especially the clergy, as in the case of the Archbishop of Kolocsa, who led the Hungarian troops alongside King Louis II at Mohács) engaged in combat as Christians were seriously misguided. True, Christians could fight wars as citizens under the direction of their secular authorities. However, secular rulers were only to wage war in defence of the people and the land entrusted to them, not as an extension of their religious convictions. As Philip Melanchthon (1497–1560) wrote, 'Christian potentates and princes are responsible with all their power to do their best to drive out all poison and wickedness.'[46] Combat was only justified as a defensive measure. It could never be legitimate when used as a means to conquer land and especially not to bring non-Christians under subjugation in order to make them Christians. Luther's other colleague and close friend Justus Jonas (1493–1555)[47] poignantly wrote, 'Although the Turks are non-Christians, there would not be sufficient cause to make war on them if they kept the peace … We can kill non-Christians with our fists but we cannot make Christians of them with our fists. We cannot, in this way, put faith and the Holy Spirit into their hearts.'[48]

Although few, there were some Protestants, particularly amongst the radicals of the reformation, that refused to endorse any military response—defensive or otherwise—against the Turks. This was a political, social, and financial manoeuvre: political, because Turkish rulers were relatively more tolerant of Protestant Christians than the Catholic inquisitors attempting to stamp out the growing Reformation movement. For example, a broadsheet from just after the battle of Mohács reported that several hundred peasants and knights, who were also of protestant persuasion, sought protection from 'Christian tyranny' in

[46] Philip Melanchthon in Paolo Giovio, *Ursprung des Turkischen Reichs bis auff den itzigen Solyman*, trans. Justus Jonas (Augsburg: Steiner, 1538), b4^{r}-b3^{v}: 'Die christlichen Potentaten und Fürsten schuldig sind mit all jrs Vorzügen und macht, das bey ir bestes zutun, das solche gifft und grewel werde ausgetrettet.'

[47] *OER*, 352–353.

[48] Justus Jonas (and Philip Melanchthon), *Das Siebend Capitel Danielis von des Türcken Gottes Lesterung und Schrecklicher Morderey* (Wittenberg: Hans Lufft, 1530), 33.

Turkish lands.[49] Socially, it was well known that labourers, regardless of religion, were desired and well rewarded by the Ottomans,[50] and financially, taxes levied for war against the Turks became so high that, even with their own imposing taxes, Ottoman rule looked more desirable financially.[51] Thus, as several contemporary accounts reported, a Turkish conquest was not universally viewed as dreadful. Joachim Greff noted that he had heard several Europeans express, 'Ha, what do I care who conquers us—the Devil, his mother, the Turk, or whoever! It's all the same to me who is my ruler … it's far better to live under the Turk than under some papist tyrant.'[52] The Turks, it was also reported, even allowed Christians to—conditionally—retain their faith.[53]

The primary reason for the various suggestions of non-resistance amongst the growing radical Reformation groups, according to George Williams, was primarily theological.[54] For example, Luther's early nemesis Thomas Müntzer (c. 1489–1525), although he regarded the Turks as a scourge from God, considered Turkish Muslims to be potential members of the *Ecclesia spiritualis* or, as he put it, the universal church of the elect (*allgemeine Kirche der Auserwählten*).[55] The conditions of this unity, which existed amongst 'all dispersions, races, and religions', was

---

[49] Setton, 'Lutheranism and the Turkish Peril', *BS* 3 (1962), 161; Miller, 'Holy War', 247.

[50] Hans Kissling, 'Türkenfurcht und Türkenhoffnung im 15/16. Jahrhundert: zur Geschichte eines "Komplexes"', *SF* 23 (1964), 16; Miller, 'Holy War', 247.

[51] Cyril Horacek, 'Die wirtschaftlichen und sozialen Aspekte der Türkenkriege im 16. Jahrhundert', in Felix Tauer (ed.), *Charisteria Orientalia Praecipue ad Persiam Pertinentia* (Prague: Nakladatelstvi Ceskoslovenske Akademie VED, 1956), 105; Karl Vocelka, 'Die inneren Auswirkungen des Auseinandersetzung Österreichs mit den Osmanen', *Südostforschung* 36 (1977), 16–17.

[52] Joachim Greff, *Vermanung an gantze Deudsche Nation, wider den Türckischen Tyrannen, Sampt einem Gebet zu Gott, Umb errettunge von demselben Erbfeinde* (Wittenberg: Kreutzer, 1541), c2^{r}; Bohnstedt, 'Scourge', 20; Miller, 'Holy War', 246–247.

[53] The conditions were reported in a work entitled *Ausszug eynes Briefes wie einer so in der turkey wonhafft seinem freündt in dise landt geschreiben un wessen sey und wie Türckisch Regiment un wessen sey und wie er es mit den landen so er erobert zu halten pflegt kürtzlich in Teütsche sprach gebraucht nützlich diser zeyt zu wissen* (Wittenberg: Schirlentz, 1526): 'Our Lord the Turkish Emperor and his officials allow everyone to believe whatever he chooses, so long as he always keeps his opinions strictly to himself …' (quoted in Bohnstedt, 'Scourge', 20). On its various reprints, see Göllner, *Turcica*, 246–250, 813, 874.

[54] George H. Williams, *The Radical Reformation*, 3rd edn. (Kirksville: 16th Century Journal Publications, 1992), 1266–1267, 1270–1271.

[55] Williams, *Reformation*, 1266; Dieter Fauth, 'Das Türkenbild bei Thomas Müntzer', *BTZ* 11:1 (1994), 6.

simple conformity to the 'inner word', which was revealed to all creatures through the Holy Spirit.[56] Müntzer thus wrote, 'The Christian faith which I preach may not be in accord with that of Luther but it is identical with that in the hearts of the elect throughout the earth … For even if someone were born a Turk he still has the beginning of the same faith, that is, the movement of the holy spirit.'[57] Therefore, Christians should not engage in warring against the Turks but rather better themselves (and destroy the godless within Christendom) so that they, by their example, might bring about the conversion of unconverted Turks.[58]

The ex-Lutheran pastor turned spiritualist Sebastian Franck (c. 1499–1542) called for non-resistance on similar grounds. He saw the various divisions amongst Christians spawned from Luther's revolt—the Lutherans, Zwinglians, Anabaptists—alongside the encroaching Turks as a sign that history was coming to a close. He further speculated that before the end a great unifying movement of God would arise, which would 'draw together an invisible, spiritual church in the unity of the spirit and faith from among all people, and it will be organised and ruled through the eternal, invisible word of God alone without external means.'[59] This *geystlich kirche* included all people, for, Franck wrote, with this new spiritualism there was, adapting Galatians 3:28, 'now neither Turk nor Christian.'[60] In a letter to another disillusioned Lutheran turned radical named John Campanus (c. 1500–1574), he counselled, 'Consider as thy brothers all Turks and heathen, wherever they be, who fear God and work righteousness, instructed by God and inwardly drawn by him, even though they have never heard of baptism, indeed of Christ himself, neither of his story or Scripture, but

---

[56] In Williams, *Reformation*, 1266n47. Müntzer, it must be noted, was not a pacifist. See Harold Bender, 'The Pacifism of the 16th Century Anabaptists', *CH* 24 (1955), 121–122.

[57] Thomas Müntzer, 'To Frederick the Wise. Allstedt, 3 August 1524,' in Peter Matheson (trans. and ed.), *The Collected Works of Thomas Müntzer* (Edinburg: T & T Clark, 1988), 111.

[58] Fauth, 'Türkenbild', 11.

[59] Sebastian Franck, *Chronica unnd Beschreibung der Türckey mit yhrem begriff, ynnhalt, provincien, völckern, ankunfft, kriege, reysen, glauben, religionen, gesatzen, sytten, geperde, weis, regimente, frümkeyt, undd bossheiten* (Nürnberg: Peypus, 1530), K3^{v}: 'ein unsichtpar geystlich kirchen in ainigkeit des geyst und glauben versamlet unter allen völckern und allein durchs ewig unsichbar wort von Got on aynich eusserlich mittel regiert will anrichten.'

[60] Franck, *Chronica*, O3^{r}: 'Also das wir weder Türcken noch Christen nun seind.'

only of his power through the inner Word perceived within and made fruitful. For the Lord Himself gives dispensation to such as these.'[61]

Where there was a great deal of unanimity amongst ecclesiastical authors was over the issue of combating the Turks with so-called spiritual warfare.[62] A few months after the fall of Belgrade a popular anonymous booklet in a southern German dialect entitled *Türken biechlin. Ain Nutzlich Gesprech oder Underrede etlicher personen* was published.[63] The central theme running throughout is that 'Christians must desist from sin and put their own house in order before they can free themselves from the Turkish menace.'[64] This motif remained constant in nearly every subsequent publication in the *Türkenbüchlein* genre. However, as Gregory Miller has observed, there is a significant difference in emphases between Catholic and protestant writers.[65] Roman Catholics encouraged, and mandated in some cases, various spiritual and liturgical disciplines with hopes of gaining God's favour for both the protection of Christendom and the success of the military. And since sin was the ultimate cause of Turkish victory a typical Catholic sermon argued that sin 'would be cancelled through repentance and reform; and with the reason removed, God would cease to be angry and would drop the scourge from his hands. Then the Turk would stand alone and would become powerless and incapable of further victories.'[66] To remind parishoners of the impending threat and the necessity for repentance, various liturgical rites were also initiated. For example, in 1532 Duke George of Saxony instituted the *Türkenglocken* throughout Saxon churches. At noon everyday a special bell was to be rung followed by individual and corporate recitation of the Lord's Prayer and the Ave Maria.[67]

---

[61] Franck, 'A Letter to John Campanus', in George H. Williams (ed.), *Spiritual and Anabaptist Writers* (London: SCM, 1952), 156. See Bender, 'Pacifism', 124–126 for further examples of advocates of non-resistance.

[62] See Bohnstedt, 'Scourge', 17; Miller, 'Holy War', 251–252. Miller's extensive research into this area adds that the 'sermons, hymns, and prayers that admonished spiritual exercises in the face of the Turkish threat are so numerous that they almost form a distinct category of Reformation-era religious publications.'

[63] Göllner has identified seven different editions from its initial publication in 1522 up to and through the 1530s (*Turcica*, 172–175).

[64] Bohnstedt, 'Scourge', 10.

[65] Miller, 'Holy War', 253–259.

[66] Matthias Kretz, *Ein sermon von dem Turckenzug durch Doctor Mathiam Krecz zu Mosspurg in sant Castelsstifft gepredigt* (n.p., 1532), in Bohnstedt, 'Scourge', 41; for more examples, see Miller, 'Holy War', 255n46.

[67] Alfred Moschkau (ed.), 'Das Türkenglocken', in *Saxonia: Zeitschrift für Geschichts Altertums- und Landeskunde des Königreichs Sachsen* (Leipzig: Louis Senf, 1877), 95.

Every Christian was also expected to offer the following daily prayer: 'Lord have mercy upon us; gives us grace to amend our lives; preserve us from falling into the hands of that horrible fiend, the Turk.'[68] Also indicative of the sinfulness of European Christians were the emerging schisms sparked by the Lutheran Reformation, and in many catholic works authors addressed a potential Lutheran reader and appealed for their submission to the pope and return to the Catholic fold.[69] Some even blamed Luther specifically for Turkish victories in Hungary.[70]

Lutherans also urged similar spiritual responses but as a means to a different end.[71] Although they condoned an armed defence of the empire, they exhorted their readers to prayer and repentance for the mere survival of Christianity.[72] The Lutheran authors followed Luther's lead in viewing contemporary events as an eschatological struggle, which pitted the false church (Turks, Papists, Anabaptists, etc.) against the true church of God.[73] The Turks, although they were powerful and were capable of wreaking horrendous havoc, could only be externally successful; that is, they could conquer Christian lands and even rid Europe of its Christians, but they could not take an individual Christian's soul. The conflict between Europe and the Ottomans was thus seen as more than a war between enemies of various nations. It was a spiritual struggle. The Turks were not out for mere land. They desired the souls of human beings. Therefore, the 'best weapon', read an anonymous but probably Lutheran-inspired broadsheet from 1531, was that Christians 'hope in God alone', 'trust in his word', and

---

[68] Bohnstedt, 'Scourge', 42.

[69] Bohnstedt, 'Scourge', 28–29.

[70] Bohnstedt, 'Scourge', 12. For a similar allegation by a modern Roman Catholic scholar, see Hartmann Grisar, *Martin Luther: His Life and Work*, vol. 3, 2nd edn., trans. E.M. Lamond (Westminster: Newman Press, 1950), 82.

[71] The Swiss reformers were similar to the Lutherans in their suggestions for a spiritual response towards the Turkish threat. Since, geographically, they were further from the threat they did not produce near the amount of literature as the Lutherans did.

[72] These prayers failed to place much trust in an armed response against the Turk, but rather emphasised reliance on God against the enemies of Christendom—both the Turks and the papacy—that God would see his faithful church through the turmoil of the times (Miller, 'Holy War', 255–256).

[73] In 1529, Luther published *Eine Heerpredigt widder den Türken*, which set the Turkish war in the terms of the Old Testament prophet Daniel (see pages 79–83 below). The Lutherans followed suit by consistently identifying the Turks (and the papacy) as enemies of Christ and the embodiment of prophetic figures signifying the beginning of the apocalypse. See Bohnstedt, 'Scourge', 12; Setton, 'Lutheranism', 152–154; Fischer-Galati, 'Reformation and Islam', 55.

'build entirely upon Christ, who has overcome the world. Through him [Christians] would be victorious and in the end obtain eternal salvation.'[74] Rather than lengthy prayers, masses, processions, etc., the Lutherans urged that simple spontaneous prayers or the psalms be prayed and hymns be sung all the while asking God for forgiveness.[75]

The idea of sending Christian missionaries to bring about the conversion of the Turks was also put forward as a way to respond to the religious aspect of the Ottoman threat. The famous fifteenth-century letter of Pope Pius II to Mehmet is notorious, if not for its naïveté for its optimism. After articulating the grounds for the Christian faith, the Pontiff demanded that the Turkish Sultan believe and receive baptism after which time, it was promised, he would be embraced as a Christian brother and spared from a crusade.[76] There were other less eminent but equally naïve statements in the late fifteenth century suggesting that the Turks could easily be converted which would thus circumvent war altogether. For example, the German Knight Arnold von Harff (c. 1471–1505) wrote, recounting what he witnessed in his 1499 pilgrimage to Istanbul: 'if preachers were sent among them, they would all be converted to Christianity because they were so credulous.'[77] Another pilgrim to Istanbul named Johannes Baptista Italus claimed to have received a vision foretelling a mass Muslim (and Jewish) conversion to Christianity.[78] This and other similar 'prophecies' were expected to begin being fulfilled in 1517.[79] If anything, the year 1517 suggested the very opposite. Selim nearly doubled the size of the Ottoman Empire when he defeated the Mamlūk dynasty in January 1517 thus thrusting the Ottomans to the fore as not only a single unified Islamic Empire but also one of the greatest existing political and military powers.[80]

---

[74] *Ein spruch wie man dem Thürcken macht widerstehen auch wie sich die Christen solcher nott sollen halten* (n.p., 1531): 'Ist das darfur die beste woffen; Das wir alleyn auff Gott thun hoffen; Darneben in seyn wort vertrawen; Und gentzlich vns auff Christum bawen; Der die welt vberwunden hat; Durch jhn wir auch obsygen drat; Vnd endtlich kumen in der zeyt zu der ewigen seligkeyt.'

[75] For examples of hymns, see Sydney Moore, 'The Turkish Menace in the Sixteenth Century', *MLR* 40 (1945), 30–36; Miller, 'Holy War', 255n47; 258n58.

[76] Southern, *Western Views of Islam*, 99–102.

[77] Arnold von Harff, *The Pilgrimage of Arnold von Harff*, trans. and ed. M. Letts (London: Hakluyt Society, 1946), 116, 119. Besides this hopelessly optimistic statement, von Harff's description of Islam and Turkish culture is unusually objective. In addition to his *Pilgrimage*, see Schwoebel, *Shadow*, 180, 181, 183, 188, 194–196.

[78] Schwoebel, *Shadow*, 220.

[79] Schwoebel, *Shadow*, 220.

[80] Hess, 'Ottoman Conquest', 55–76.

Coinciding with the year of Selim's conquest was the drafting and proliferation of Luther's *Ninety-five Theses*, which would forever split an already disunited western church. The various sects that emerged and existed within the early sixteenth century also gave impetus to a variety of quasi-missionary approaches to the Turks more theological in nature than that of Arnold von Harff and Johannes Baptista Italus. Humanists such as Desiderius Erasmus (c. 1466–1536) thought that pious Turks were at least ripe for conversion if not already members of the church.[81] Therefore, he urged in his *Enchiridion militio christiani* (1518) that Europe keep the conversion of the Turks at the forefront of their minds by demonstrating the exemplary morality of Christianity.[82] Addressing the Turkish problem directly in 1530, following the first siege of Vienna, Erasmus condoned a defensive war against the Ottomans so long as it was waged in the right spirit and led by secular officials, for he was especially appalled by the negative stereotyping of the Turks by the ignorant who 'forget first that [the Turks] are human beings, and secondly that they are half-Christian.'[83] Moreover, one must never forget, he argued in the *Utilissima consultatio de bello Turcis inferendo*:

> The best possible outcome would be to conquer the dominions of the Turks in the same way that the Apostles brought all the world's nations into Christ's empire. The next best would be to bring this about by force of arms, in such a way that they would rejoice at being defeated. And the most important inducement towards the latter is that they should see our Christianity to be more than words, viewing in us spirits and behaviour worthy of the Gospel. Honest messengers must be dispatched into the harvest-field, seeking not their own ends, but those of Jesus Christ. Finally, those who cannot be converted, should be allowed to live for some time under their own laws, until bit by bit they merge with ourselves.[84]

The Swiss Reformer Theodor Bibliander (c. 1504–1564) offered even more specific suggestions for approaching the Turks from a missiolog-

---

[81] George H. Williams, 'Erasmus and the Reformers on Non-Christian Religions and *Salus Extra Ecclesia*', in Theodore Rabb and Jerrold Seigel (eds.), *Action and Conviction in Early Modern Europe* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969), 336–337; Miller, 'Holy War', 238–239.

[82] Erasmus, *Enchiridion militis christiani*, in *Collected Works of Erasmus*, vol. 66 (London: University of Toronto Press, 1988), 10–12.

[83] Erasmus, *Consultatio de bello Turcis inferendo*, in Housley (trans. and ed.), *Documents on the Later Crusades, 1274–1580* (London: Macmillan Press, 1996), 178.

[84] Erasmus, *Consultatio*, 182.

ical perspective.[85] He considered a missionary response to Islam an imperative and identified language to be the greatest barrier to the proselytisation of Muslims. Therefore, he strongly encouraged the study of Arabic for would-be missionaries,[86] for he was convinced that there was enough common ground between Christianity and Islam that missionaries could use the Qur'ān, and Nicholas of Cusa's *pia interpretatio*, as a tool for a starting point in religious dialogue.[87] Behind his missionary optimism was a soteriology akin yet theologically distinct from his predecessor Ulrich Zwingli (1484–1531). Both cherished the thought of the salvation of non-Christians, but where Zwingli approached the question of soteriology from God's primordial election Bibliander based it on God's will that all men be saved. According to the latter, all humans have an innate knowledge of God, which could be complemented to the point that they could become 'friends of God' by special, extra-biblical revelation or general revelation. Applied to the Muslim, all that was necessary was for them to deny the 'non-Christian' elements of the Qur'ān.[88]

An imperial knight and quasi-Lutheran named Hartmuth von Cronberg (1488–1549) offered a unique and comprehensive suggestion for responding to the Ottomans, which seems to be a reformulation of the aims and methods of the crusades as they were formulated in the middle of the thirteenth century.[89] In an open letter to Pope Adrian VI (1522–1523), he called upon the Pontiff to abolish the papacy and all the

---

[85] Miller notes that Bibliander was 'significantly influenced' by Erasmus' approach towards the Turk ('Holy War', 239). Cf. Williams, '*Salus extra Ecclesia*', 360–361; Rudolf Pfister, 'Reformation, Türken, und Islam', *Zw* 10:6 (1956), 451–452; Harry Clark, 'The Publication of the Koran in Latin: A Reformation Dilemma', *SCJ* 15:1 (1984), 6; Bobzin, *Der Koran*, 179n139.

[86] Bibliander himself studied Arabic with hopes of going to Egypt as a missionary, but was convinced by his colleague Heinrich Bullinger to remain in Zurich (see Emil Egli, 'Biblianders Leben und Schriften', in *Analecta Reformatoria*, vol. 2 [Zurich: Zürcher and Furrer, 1901], 78; 'Biblianders Missionsgedanke', *Zw* 3:2 [1913], 46–50. Walter Holsten, 'Reformation und Mission', *ARG* 44 [1953], 24, 28; Rudolf Pfister, 'Das Turkenbuchlein Theodor Biblianders', *TZ* 9 [1953], 444n16). The humanist Juan Vives (1492–1540) also viewed language as the greatest problem to the conversion of Muslims. He wrote, 'Oh that God would have given the Hagarians, Turks, and us a common language! Then I would hope that in a short time many would give themselves to our faith' (*Wie der Türck die Christen haltet so under jm leben*, e3^{v}, in Miller, 'Holy War', 240n8).

[87] Bullinger and Bucer held similar positions (Williams, '*Salus extra Ecclesia*', 356). Among the Swiss reformers, Bibliander was the most knowledgeable and most concerned with Islam.

[88] Williams, '*Salus extra Ecclesia*', 357–359.

[89] Kedar, *Crusade and Mission*, 159–203.

monasteries and then to secularise the wealth of the church so that a major assault could be launched against the Turks by imperial forces. Then, trained evangelical preachers could be sent out to proclaim the Gospel. Hartmuth was optimistic that Turkish Muslims would easily be converted if they were shown that Christianity 'stands on the foundation of Christ alone (as the entire holy Scripture shows) and on brotherly love, [and] not on Rome or the papacy or our own interests.'[90] Although the Lutherans certainly would have applauded his desire that 'all people of the earth be moved to the true faith', they certainly would not have shared his imperialist convictions. And after learning of the Lutheran stance on the limits of politico-miliary might he grew disillusioned and disassociated himself from the Lutherans.[91]

The radical wing of the Reformation also saw a golden opportunity for a unique kind of missionary approach to Muslims. Looking forward to the Turkish conquest of Europe, Hans Hut (c. 1490–1527) and Augustine Bader (fl. 1530), for example, drawing upon the legacy of Müntzer, saw the rise of the Turks as a sign of Christ's imminent return. They were more than just a sign, however, for both also envisioned the Turks playing an active role in the Final Judgement as God's 'instrument of ushering in the Kingdom and punishing the godless.'[92] After ridding Christendom of elements of practices offensive to Muslims (and Jews) as well as a general repentance from true believers, pacifistic and repentant Christians, it was hoped, would then be instrumental by their example in bringing about their conversion.[93]

The eclectic and apocalyptic thought of the catholic turned Spiritualist Guillame Postel (1510–1581) was also largely missiological. He theorised that Muslims, as descendants of Ishmael, retained knowledge of divine truth *via* the father of their faith, Abraham. However, Postel also believed that they were still in need of saving truth. Therefore, in addition to encouraging Arabic studies for missionaries, including publishing his Arabic grammar around 1539, he drafted an apology for Chris-

---

[90] Hartmuth von Cronberg, 'Sendbrief an Hadrian VI', in Eduard Kück (ed.), *Die Schriften Hartmuth von Cronberg* (Halle: Niemeyer, 1899), 120: 'uff den eynigen gruntsteyn Christum (uff welchen die gantz heylig geschrifft deuttet) und uff die ware bruderliche libe getstelt, nit uff Rom oder desselbigen Baptstumb, und uff unseren eygnen nutz.'

[91] *LC*, 2:23n4.

[92] Williams, *Reformation*, 298.

[93] See Williams, *Reformation*, 1264–1269 for various other radical reformation perspectives on Muslims.

tianity and an attack on the Qur'ān in 1543, which was based solely upon Arabic sources (*ex ipsissimis exemplaribus Arabicis*).[94] A year later he published his great apology for global missions and handbook for a missionary confrontation with Islam, *De orbis terrae concordia*.[95] Within it, he strongly encouraged the study of oriental languages, especially Arabic, and systematically set out, emulating the example of Ramon Llull, to demonstrate the rationality of Christianity from universal principles of logic. He then challenged Turkish officials to facilitate 'rational disputes between [the Gospel] and the Qur'ān …. If the Qur'ān wins, all will become Muslims.'[96] However, Postel was convinced that, using his method, Christian apologists could demonstrate the Gospel is most true (*verissimum Evangelium*). If Muslim rulers would permit such a discussion and remove the fear of punishment for apostasy, then many would convert and all humans could be reunited under the true religion of Abraham.

Sixteenth-Century Perceptions of the Turks and Islam

Writings on the Turkish threat were manifold during the sixteenth century, especially in German. Bibliographers have identified nearly 2,500 booklets and other forms of literature such as hymns, ballads, plays, and so on which, in some way or another, addressed the turmoil caused by the Ottomons in the sixteenth century.[97] Many of them mention aspects of the Islamic religion or Turkish Muslim culture. This, coupled with scholarly literature written primarily in Latin produced before 1546, such as Theodor Bibliander's massive anthology on Islam, *Machumetis Saracenorum principis vita ac doctrina omnis, quae & Ismahelitarum lex, & Alcroanum discitur* (1543), as well as Guillame Postel's works, provide an

[94] Guillame Postel, *Alcorani seu Legis Mahometi et Evangelistarum Concordiae Liber, in quo de Calamitatibus Orbi Christiano Imminentibus Tractatur* (Paris: Petrus Gromorsus, 1543), 6–7.

[95] Its contents are summarised by Postel overleaf of the title page: 'Primo, religionis Christianae placita rationibus philosophicis docentur. Secundo, vita, educatio moresque Muhamedis legislatoris Arabum, eiusque sectatorum traditur: demum Alcoranum a capite ad calcem ex Arabico excutitur, et refutatur. Tertio, quid commune totius orbis tam iure humano, quam divino habeat. Quarto, qua arte sine seditione falsae de Deo, diisve persuasiones, ad veram pertrahi possint.'

[96] Guillame Postel, *De Orbis Terrae Concordia* (Basel: Oporinus, 1544), 258: 'Facite ut in provinciis vestris legatur Evangelium, et disputetur de eo, et de Alcorano cum rationibus … si vincet, omnes fient Mussulmani.'

[97] See volumes 1 and 2 of Göllner's *Turcica*.

exorbitant amount of information from which to gain a general picture of how sixteenth-century scholars as well as the laity perceived Islam.[98]

Like the Middle Ages a host of terms were used in lieu of 'Islam.' Riccoldo da Monte di Croce was one of the first western authors to use a derivative of the proper term 'Islam' in his *Contra legem Sarracenorum*. Editions printed in the sixteenth century read, 'The Saracens themselves call it *al-Islam*, which means the law of the salvation of God.'[99] Although this passage was widely read in both the Latin and was preserved in Luther's 1542 German translation, the most common way to denote Islam was with the German or Latin adjective 'Muḥammadan', 'Turkish', or 'Saracen' with its complementary noun 'faith', 'law', or, occasionally, 'religion.'[100] A perusal of the excerpts of titles given to the various German translations of Georgius' *Tractatus de moribus, condictionibus et nequicia Turcorum* is demonstrative of this. The Strasbourg edition reads, *Saracenisch Türkisch un[d] Mahometisch Glaub Gesatz* …, and the Augsburg edition, *Cronica … der Türckey … glaube, Religio, Gesatzen* …

When sixteenth century authors wrote about the adherents of Islam they used an equally diverse vocabulary. Of course the simple designation 'Turk' was the most common. However, 'Muḥammadan' and 'Saracen' were also used quite frequently. Justus Jonas even attempted to explain the etymology of the term 'Saracen.' The Arabs, he explained, were originally and rightfully called Hagarians since they descended from Ishmael's mother Hagar, but in order to lay claim to Abraham's religion they said they descended from Sarah and began using the term Saracens.[101] Nevertheless, the proper term 'Muslim' was available to authors in the sixteenth century, again, in Riccoldo, but,

---

[98] A general cross-section of these sources was selected under the guidance of John Bohnstedt's 'The Infidel Scourge of God: The Turkish Menace as Seen by German Pamphleteers of the Reformation Era' and Gregory Miller's unpublished dissertation, 'Holy War and Holy Terror: Views of Islam in German Pamphlet Literature, 1520–1545.' The scholarly sources were primarily chosen under the guidance of Hartmut Bobzin's *Der Koran im Zeitalter der Reformation*.

[99] *CA*, WA 53:341.10: 'Ipsi autem Saraceni vocant eam denominatiue Elesalem, quod interpretur lex salutis dei.'

[100] See Miller, 'Holy War', 101. The term 'Islam' did not appear in English until 1613 and French in 1687, according to David Blanks ('Western Views of Islam in the Premodern Period: A Brief History of Past Approaches', in D. Blanks and Michael Frassetto [eds.], *Western Views of Islam in the Medieval and Early Modern Europe: Perception of Other* [London: Macmillan Press, 1999], 14).

[101] Jonas, *Danielis*, d2[r]. Isidore of Seville and John of Damascus suggested this in the seventh and eight century (see Tolan, *Saracens*, 287n25).

according to Gregory Miller's research, it only appears once throughout the gamut of sixteenth-century German *Türkenbüchlein* when a former Turkish captive named Bartholomew Georgijevic, writing in 1545, noted that adherents to Islam were called *Musulman*.[102]

As for the prophet of Islam, there were a few sources from which one could glean information on Muḥammad's life circulated in the first half of the sixteenth century. Among the German pamphlet literature, the former Wittenberg student Heinrich Knaust's *Von geringem herkommen schentlichern leben schmehlichem ende des Türckischen abgots Machomets und seiner verdamlichen und Gotsslesterischen Ler* (1542) was, it seems, the only extensive *historie vom Machomet*.[103] His primary concern, as indicated in his opening epistle to Joachim Margrave of Brandenburg (1505–1571), was to understand the origins of the historical religion of the Turks. In the first chapter, he wrote, 'The Turks come from … Ishmael, who dwelt in Arabia,'[104] and then traced the lineage of Ishmael's descendants all the way to Muḥammad's parents ʿAbd Allāh (*Abdala*) and Amīna (*Enima*) who, he wrote, gave birth to the Devil's brainchild (*Teuffelsskopf*), Muḥammad, in a town called Yathrib (*Utrarip*) on the outskirts of Mecca. Muḥammad's father was an Arab nobleman and his mother a Jew. The former also had a Jewish friend gifted in astrology, who predicted that his son, Muḥammad, would begin a new religion and lead a powerful empire. After ʿAbd Allāh's death, Muḥammad's mother and grandfather ʿAbd al-Muṭṭalib (*Abdemutaleph*) took him to stay with his Uncle Abū Ṭālib (*Abutalip*), through whom he heard of the Jew's astrological prognostication. When he reached maturity, seeing the confusion of the people of Arabia and Africa over whether or not to follow Christianity, Judaism, or Arianism, he recalled these predictions and began to develop his 'shameful and outrageous lies' (*schendtliche / unverschampte lügen*). He did this, Knaust theorised, by piecing together elements of both the Old and New Testament, which

---

[102] Bartholomew Georgijevic, *Von der Türcken gebreuchen, gewonheyten und Ceremonien* (Nürnberg: Buldemunde, 1545), b4^{r}. Unaware of Riccoldo's and Luther's usage, Miller suggests that this is perhaps the first published use of the term 'Muslim' in Western literature ('Holy War', 100). Postel also used this term in *De orbis*, 258.

[103] Heinrich Knaust, *Von geringem herkommen schentlichern leben schmehlichem ende des Türckischen abgots Machomets und seiner verdamlichen und Gotteslesterischen Ler allen fromen Christen zu disen geferlichen Zeiten zur Sterckung unnd trost im glauben an Jesum Christum* (Berlin: Weisen, 1542), b1^{r}. Cf. Miller, 'Holy War', 114.

[104] Knaust, *Von … leben … Machomets*, b2^{r}: 'Der Türcke von … Ismael herkom der gewonet hat in Arabia.'

he had learned of from a monk named John in Egypt and a heretic named Sergius that way his law would appeal to both Christians and Jews.

Knaust also recounted other means by which Muḥammad attracted his first followers. In the presence of Jews he claimed to be the long-expected messiah. In addition to his knowledge of the Scriptures, he confirmed this claim by performing signs and wonders, which, according to Knaust, were nothing but black magic (*schwartzkünstiger*) and demonic miracles (*Teufflischen wunderzeychnen*), and, along with other 'signs' such as using a trained pigeon that ate grain out of his ear thus giving off the appearance of receiving words from the Holy Spirit, Muḥammad was also able to win over the Arabs with his law. 'The Ishmaelites or Saracens still to this day', Knaust recorded before concluding his German *sīra*, 'take this law as their law and confess Muḥammad to be their legislator.'[105] After some mistaken references to Muḥammad's preaching in areas as far as Spain and Syria, Knaust claimed that he died of poisoning at the age of 34. And because Muḥammad had prophesied for many years that he would rise from the dead after three days, his followers waited to see if this would come true. When, after waiting eleven days, it did not happen they transported his body to be buried in, Knaust concluded, curiously using Arabic terminology, *Madīna al-rasūl* (*Medinaraziel*) or 'the city of the prophet.'[106]

Theodor Bibliander also included a brief, anecdotal biography of Muḥammad in his *Ad nominis Christiani socios consultatio, quanam ratione Turcarum dira potentia repelli possit ac debeat a populo Christiano* (1542). He placed Muḥammad's birth in 597 in Yathrib (*Ittacip*), which, he noted, was not far from the most famous city of wealthy Arabia called Mecca. His father, ʿAbd Allāh, was a Persian and his mother, Amīna (*Emma*), was an Arab (*Ishmaelite*) who, following the Law of Moses had her son circumcised after the manner and custom of the Jews. Nature endowed Muḥammad with excellent gifts (e.g., he was handsome, well-built, strong-willed, eloquent, witty, and clever), and if he would have used them well he could have been an excellent and noble man. Instead, Bibliander wrote, Muḥammad followed his own evil lusts and suc-

[105] Knaust, *Von … leben … Machomets*, c3^{v}: 'Die Ismaeliten oder Sarracenen nennen diss Gesetz noch heuttige tages jr Gesetz und bekennen Machomet sey jr Legislator gewesen.'

[106] Knaust, *Von … leben … Machomets*, d3^{r-v}. This is a rare but correct reference whereas most European sources claim that Muḥammad was buried in Mecca.

cumbed to the Devil. And so he used his natural talents for the destruction of the world. Interestingly, after explaining the prophet's diabolical intentions, two versions of Muḥammad's early life are recounted in the *Consultatio*, which indicates that Bibliander at least attempted to be concerned not solely with polemics but also historical truth. Some authors say, he wrote, that after both of his parents died he was raised by a wealthy merchant named ʿAbd al-Muṭṭalib (*Abdemonaplis*) who treated him as a son and gave him a share of his business. When he died Muḥammad married his 50-year old widow, gaining the rest of ʿAbd al-Muṭṭalib's riches, which he then used to influence people. Others say, he wrote, that when he was placed under the care of ʿAbd al-Muṭṭalib (*Manephis*) he accompanied his guardian's caravans to Egypt and Syria during which time he became familiar with Jewish and Christian teachings, learning them from a Jacobite Archdeacon (from Antioch) named Matthew and a Nestorian monk from Constantinople named Sergius. From these two heretics and other Jewish acquaintances he eventually developed a new religion, using the epileptic fits that befell him to suggest that his 'most subtle lie' was received during ecstatic mystical experiences. He even told his wife Khadīja (*Cadiga* or, as some others called her, he added, *Gandigena*), that the Archangel Gabriel brought him divine revelations (*coelestia nuncia*), which caused him to shake and sweat profusely. As a result, being proud and gossipy, she began to circulate rumours that he had been given a new revelation. Word quickly spread that the angels were communicating with Muḥammad, and because the Arabs were corrupt, Bibliander continued, Muḥammad was able to spread the false teachings he concocted from what he had learned from the above-mentioned heretics as well as the Jews.[107] In addition to inventing a new religion, Bibliander added that he also devised a new civil and religious law grounded upon his so-called revelations through which he was able to unite the Arabs under one cause.[108] This unity, which was also brought on by promises of carnal pleasure, wealth, false signs and wonders, and so on, enabled the Arabs to defeat Byzantine forces and establish an independent kingdom. By 630, he added, they had conquered Syria, with Damascus as their new capital, and then

[107] Theodor Bibliander, *Ad Nominis Christiani Socios Consultatio, quá nam Ratione Turcarum Dira Potentia Repelli Possit ac Debeat à Populo Christiano* (Basel: Brylinger, 1542), 14^{r}-17^{v}. He was apparently convinced that Muḥammad was taught by 'duobus hæreticis' and 'duobus apostatis Iudæis' as he later recounted this and other indicting biographical information in his *Apologia pro editione Alcorani*, in *Machumetis*, β3^{v}.

[108] Bibliander, *Consultatio*, 16^{r}.

they began warring against Persia. Muḥammad soon died after a seven day bout with pleurisy brought on by poisoning. When it became clear to his followers that he was not going to be raised into heaven by the angels after three days, as he had promised, they buried him in a hanging casket in Mecca.[109] Following his death, the Turks (!), by 755, had spread Islam throughout Egypt, Africa, and Asia.

Information concerning the life of Muḥammad can be found piecemeal in other early sixteenth-century publications. For example, both Nicholas of Cusa's *Cribratio Alkorani* and Riccoldo da Monte di Croce's *Contra legem Sarracenorum* recount the Sergius legend,[110] and Bernhard von Breydenbach's popular *Peregrinatio in Terram Sanctam* contained two chapters on Muḥammad's life.[111] Certainly the days were long past of charging Muslims of worshipping Muḥammad,[112] but with rare exception Muḥammad was seen as one of the world's most notorious charlatans who fooled the Arabs into accepting him as a prophet and who also sought to dissuade Christians from faith in Christ.[113]

In addition to the popularising of Muḥammad's biography, especially through Knaust's German booklet, there were some remarkable developments in the dissemination of the Qur'ānic text in the first half of the sixteenth century. Already by 1458 Juan de Segovia criticised the old yet universally used translation of Robert of Ketton.[114] His new trilingual version, of which only the preface survives, was an attempt to remedy the inaccuracies of Robert's paraphrase. Another Latin translation was completed by yet another Spaniard named Johannes Terrolensis for the Augustinian humanist Bishop Egidio Viterbo (c. 1469–1532) by 1518.[115] In spite of these newer translations, however, Robert's translation remained influential amongst most scholars.

---

[109] Bibliander, *Consultatio*, 18^{r}.

[110] *CrA* 969; *CA*, WA 53:355.26. Riccoldo used his Arab name 'Bahira.'

[111] Bernhard, *Peregrinatio*, g3^{v}-g4^{v}.

[112] Although phrases such as that found in Knaust's title 'the Turkish idol Muḥammad' (*des Türckischen Abgots Mahomets*) were used, they were rhetorical devices. They were not intended to insinuate that Muḥammad desired to be worshipped or that Muslims worshipped him.

[113] Postel is one very rare exception. In some places (such as *De Orbis*, 258) he referred to Muḥammad as a prophet on par with, for example, Joachim of Fiore, but in others, such as his private letters, he would refer to him as *nefarius ille Pseudo-Christus Muhamed* (William Bouwsma, *Concordia Mundi: the Career and Thought of Guillaume Postel* [Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1957], 203).

[114] Burman, '*Tafsīr*', 705.

[115] Bobzin, *Der Koran*, 84–88; William Tyndale may have owned a copy of it. His

Theodor Bibliander managed to acquire an Arabic manuscript of the Qur'ān from an Italian merchant who purchased it in Algeria. Placing it alongside Robert's Qur'ān in Basel (and also the library's Arabic manuscript) he began to prepare a new Latin edition, although there was little difference between his and Robert's. When the humanist publisher Johannes Oporin (1507–1568) began to print it word reached the Council of Basel, who promptly attempted to censor it for fear that it posed a danger to those who might read it.[116] After a host of humanists and theologians from Strassbourg and Luther from Wittenberg wrote to the Council in support of its publication, it was decided that Oporin could carry on with the printing so long as his name or its origin (Basel) did not appear on the book.[117] In 1543 six different editions were printed and disseminated amongst European scholars.[118]

Opinions on the Qur'ān were as diverse as those who commented on it. Zwingli remarked that he never read greater foolishness (*grösser narrenwys*).[119] The anonymously translated German version of Dionysius the Carthusianus' *Contra Alchoranum* described it as containing the basis not only for Islamic law but also Turkish superstition (*Aberglaubens*). The picture on the title page insinuates, as already seen with Heinrich Knaust and Theodor Bibliander, that it was the product of collaboration between the Jews, Sergius the Nestorian monk, and Muḥammad.[120]

Philip Melanchthon's and Theodor Bibliander's attitudes towards the Qur'ān are particularly representative of those who were most

---

name appears, transliterated into Arabic, in the Cambridge manuscript of this translation (see Burman, 'Polemic', 193).

116 In addition to Karl Hagenbach's reproduction of the council's judgements and the various letters and positions written for and against its publication ('Rathe zu Basel', 298–326), see Clark, 'Publication', 3–12 and Bobzin, *Der Koran*, 181–209 for an overview of the controversy.

117 Amongst those from Strassbourg to write were: Martin Bucer, Casper Hedio, Ludwig Gremp, Nicolaus Gerbelius, Ludwig Bebion, Johann Sturm, Gerard Senenus, Petrus Dasypodius, Christian Herrlin and others. For their letters, see Hagenbuch, 'Rathe zu Basel', 315–320. Hagenbach and others have observed that it was ultimately Luther's letter that was responsible for reversing the council's decision.

118 See Hartmut Bobzin, 'Zur Anzahl der Drucke von Biblianders Koranausgabe im Jahr 1543', *BZGA* 85 (1985), 213–219. Also, in the same year, the catholic diplomat and orientalist Albrecht von Widmanstetter produced his *Mahometis Abdallæ filii theologia dialogo explicata*, which included an abridged translation of the Qur'ān entitled *Alcorani Epitome*, but it did not have near the influence that Bibliander's did (cf. Bobzin, *Der Koran*, 323).

119 Zwingli, *Früntlich verglimpfung und ableynung*, CR 5:786.

120 For a reproduction of the title page, see Bobzin, *Der Koran*, 73.

familiar with it. Melanchthon's initial warning to Qurʾān readers characterised the contents found within, already in the first sentence, as the madness of Muḥammad (*Mahometi furores*). Against its claim to be the revelation not only delivered through Muḥammad but also vouchsafing that which was originally received by the patriarchs, he stated unequivocally, that the Qurʾān is something new. 'These superstitions, there is no doubt', he wrote, 'are much more recent than the divine voice delivered to Noah and his sons.'[121] On account of its religious teachings, he continued, the Qurʾān and 'the sect of Muḥammad is therefore a confusion conjoined out of blasphemies, frauds, and flagrant lusts' composed by a diabolical author (*autorem diabolus*).[122]

Bibliander likewise saw the Devil behind the composition of the Qurʾān or, as he called Muḥammad, the tool of Satan (*organum Satanæ*).[123] Some of its contents are akin to the fables of old women (*anilibusque fabulis affinia*), and some of what it says appears honest and wise. This was done, he continued, to lead the most judicious of men astray into the Turk's *perversam religionem*.[124] Whereas the Bible contained truth throughout, the Qurʾān, he wrote, swarmed with absurd lies. It was also cluttered with contradictions, unlike the Bible which, although its books were written over a long period of time, remained consistent, historically and doctrinally, throughout. The Bible also cohered with reason and is clear to all its readers, but the Qurʾān was without order and it contained a labyrinth of unexplainable things (*Labyrintho inexplicabiliora*).[125]

In addition to the Qurʾān in general, the theological doctrines of Islam received a considerable amount of attention by sixteenth-century authors. Guilliame Postel was probably the most knowledgeable. In the second book of *De orbis terrae concordia* he began by stating that he would summarise the teachings of the Qurʾān first, without comment, before attempting a refutation so that 'knowledge might precede judgement.'[126] Both he and Bibliander, despite their many dis-

---

[121] Melanchthon, *Praemonitio*, CR 5:11: 'Has superstitiones nihil dubium est fuisse multo recentiores quam vocem divinam traditam Nohae et eius filiis.' This is a direct rebuttal to Q 4:163: 'We have sent you inspiration, as we sent it to Noah and the messengers after him …'

[122] Melanchthon, *Praemontio*, CR 5:12: 'Est igitur Mahometi secta confusio quaedam ex blasphemiis, lactrociniis et flagitiosis libidibus conflata.'

[123] Bibliander, *Apologia*, in *Machometis*, β3^{v}.

[124] Bibliander, *Apologia*, β3^{v}.

[125] Bibliander, *Apologia*, β4$^{r\text{-}v}$.

[126] Bouwsma, *Concordia*, 202; cf. Postel, *De orbis*, 157ff.

paraging remarks, admired the absolute monotheism of Islam. *Tawhīd* was, according to Bibliander, the *principium supremum et caput religionis Mahumeticae*,[127] which explained the rationale then for stripping Jesus of his divinity. So he wrote,

> God, [Muḥammad] says, is one. Thus he is not father and son, this would make several gods. If there were a father and a son and then several other gods, there would be a schism and several parties in heaven: therefore God has no son. God has no needs and can create and govern everything: therefore he is not in need of a son. It is wicked to imagine the members and the act of regeneration in God: therefore he is not in need of a son. Christ and his mother ate like other human beings: therefore he is not God. He has said: 'Worship God, my Lord', and because he is not God he worships God.[128]

On account of the rejection of Christ's deity, Bibliander considered Islam a heresy. In fact, he called it the most dangerous of all heresies.[129] And he went to great length in his *Apologia* for the publication of the Qur'ān to draw parallels between Islam and the heresies refuted by the church fathers and concluded that it was essentially Nestorianism, whereas most saw it as closer to Arianism.[130] Nevertheless, the monotheism of Islam and shared beliefs such as reverence for Jesus, his virgin birth, the immortality of the soul, and common eschatological themes, caused both Bibliander and Postel—especially later Postel—to consider it as a sort of *preparatio evangelii* (for the former) and *semichristianos* (for the latter).[131]

The doctrine that prompted the most sustained interest and received the most commentary was, of course, the Qur'ānic teachings on Jesus (*'Īsā*) and the rejection of the Trinity. For the Lutherans especially, the

---

[127] Bibliander, *Apologia*, β5[r].

[128] Bibliander, *Apologia*, α5[v]: 'Deus (inquit) unus est, Ergo non pater, & filius: essent enim plures. Si Pater & filius essent, & proinde plures dei, schisma consequerent, & factions in coelo: igitur Deus non habet filium, Deus nullius indigent, ac per se potuit omnia creare, omnia gubernare: igitur non genuit filium. Nefas est in Deo cogitare membra & actionem generandi: igitur non genuit filium, Christus & mater ipsius comederunt ut caeteri hominess: igitur non est Deus. Docuit, Adorate Deum & dominum meum: quare ipse non est Deus, qui Deum adorauit.'

[129] Bibliander, *Apologia*, α5[v]: 'Alcoranum inter doctrinas haereticuas rectissime constituemus: praesertim cum eius perversa dogmata ab aliis ante ipsum haereticis iactata esse.'

[130] On this subtle difference in Bibliander's thought on Islam, see Victor Segesvary, *L'Islam et la Réforme: Etude sur l'Attitude des Reformateurs Zurichois envers l'Islam, 1510–1550* (Lausanne: Editions l'Age d'Homme, 1978), 125.

[131] See Williams, '*Salus extra Eccleisam*', 360; Bouwsma, *Concordia*, 204.

denial of the deity of Christ was indicative of false religion. Philip Melanchthon applied the biblical dictum *Qui non honorat filium, non honorat patrem*[132] to Islam and reached the conclusion that it is a greatest evil (*pessimo*) and, in the final analysis, taught nothing different from the other religions of the world.[133] Justus Jonas thought that Muslims disdained Christ since they rejected his divine nature and abhorred images of him.[134] For many of the Lutheran authors, because the Muslim God was not the father of Jesus, the conclusion was reached that Muslims did not worship the same God as Christians. In fact, the God of Islam, as it was for the papacy, was really the Devil.

Information on the five pillars of Islam, though not termed as such, was also widely available.[135] Georgius de Hungaria described all five in his *Tractatus* and therefore it was available for all to read in the eight sixteenth-century Latin editions and eleven German translations.[136] The canonical prayers (*Salāt*) received the most comments, and also received the most admiration, albeit often reservedly, from Europeans. On *Salāt*, the Croatian Bartholomew Georgijevic (d. 1566)[137] noted that the daily calls to prayer were initiated by what he called a 'priest' (*pfaff*) who called out from a high tower, 'There is one true God' (*Ein warer Got allein*). Muslims, mainly males, he continued, gathered five times each day at the mosque (*meschit*), but the largest gathering was on Friday, which was honoured, he noted, because that was the day Muḥammad was born.[138] The anonymous *Ausz Ratschlage Herren Erasmi von Roterdam die Türcken zubekriegen* suggested that corporate gatherings of Muslims on Friday were instituted in order to mock Christianity.[139]

With the possibility of a Turkish conquest of Europe on everyone's mind the nature of Ottoman society especially drew the attention of

---

[132] *Scripta Phil. Melanthonis ad Historiam Profanam et Philosophiam Spectantia: 1. Chronicon Carionis*, CR 12:1077. Cf. Manfred Köhler, *Melanchthon und der Islam: Ein Beitrag zur Klärung des Verhältnisse zwischen Christentum und Fremdreligionen in der Reformationszeit* (Leipzig: Klotz, 1938), 48.

[133] Melanchthon, *Praemonitio*, CR 5:11, 13: 'Deinde eruditus conferre doctrinarum genera potest. Quid aliud dicit Mahometus quam quod ethnicae religiones tradebant?'

[134] Jonas, *Danielis*, f3^{r}.

[135] Miller disagrees ('Holy War', 131).

[136] *Tractatus*, 254ff.

[137] On Georgijevic, see Setton, *Western Hostility*, 29.

[138] Georgijevic, *Von der Türcken*, b2^{r}–c3^{r}.

[139] *Ausz Ratschlage Herren Erasmi von Roterdam die Türcken zubekriegen Der ursprung undd alle geschicthen der selbigen gegen Römische Keyser unnd gemeyne Christenheit vo anbegin des türckischen namenn nach der kürtze new verteutscht* (n.p., 1530), 17^{r}.

a range of authors. Every bit of detail—from toilet habits to dress—was noted. In general, Turkish society was described as clean, disciplined, and modest. *Ausz Ratschlage Herren Erasmi* noted, 'They despise all superfluous things as well as pride in all things.'[140] This was demonstrable in several ways. They dressed modestly, avoided unclean foods, especially pork and alcohol, and ate simple yet healthy meals with rice, bread, and lamb meat.[141] Georgijevic went into further detail by describing how their toilet habits included urination and defecation in private and bathing at least three times a day. They remove all their body hair except for beards. They were also very well educated, studying poetry, astronomy, philosophy, grammar, logic, metaphysics, geometry, philology, and rhetoric in schools for both men and women, although they learned separately from each other.[142] As seen above with Georgius, the modest dress and behaviour of women was often described with approval.[143] The treatment of women, on the other hand, was widely criticised. The freedom to divorce on what appeared to be a whim disturbed Christian authors. Some, such as Justus Jonas, would say that, on account of their liberal attitude towards divorce, there is no true marriage amongst Turkish Muslims. 'That is no true marriage if the man may abandon his wife as it pleases him and may take as many other women as he wants; true marriage is an eternal contract.'[144] Similarly, Bibliander wrote that the Creator has instituted and consecrated marriage so that humankind may live in the legal union of one husband and one wife. Therefore, the law of the Turks on polygamy had no justification. It was, in fact, a contradiction to God's law.[145]

On a different matter, the rights and status of non-Muslims in Ottoman territory was also given considerable discussion. A few tracts noted the religious tolerance of the Turks with approval. For example, *Ausz Ratschlag Erasmi* stated that 'The Turks force no one to renounce his

---

[140] *Ausz Ratschlag Erasmi*, 14^{v}: 'Sie verachten allen uberfluss und hoffart in allen dingen.'

[141] *Ausz Ratschlag Erasmi*, 13^{v}-15^{r}.

[142] Georgijevic, *Von den Türken*, c1^{r}-d4^{r}.

[143] *Ausz Ratschlag Erasmi*, 16^{v}; Bibliander, *Consultatio*, 28^{r}. See Miller, 'Holy War', 173.

[144] Jonas, *Danielis*, f3^{r}-4^{r}: 'Das ist kein rechter ehestand wann der man das weib mag verlassen seins gefallens und mag Ander weiber nemen so viel er wil Dann ein rechter ehestand ist ewig verbundnis.'

[145] Bibliander, *Consultatio*, 25^{r-v}.

faith or to accept their's in their land.'[146] However, most argued, such as Justas Jonas, that this was a sham used to entice Christians towards Islam.

> Some uneducated persons say that the Turkish emperor allows freedom of faith to everyone. But this is far from the truth. Consider what the Turk does to all those who come under his control. He forcibly takes from parents one of every three children; then the parents must look on helplessly while their own beloved children are indoctrinated in the Muḥammadan errors and taught to become accustomed to Turkish ways.[147]

The taking of a third of a family's children undoubtedly refers to the *devşirme* levy of Christian children for service to the sultan, which, along with other forms of servitude, appalled European writers.[148] All of this information served to demonise Islam in order that Christians, while becoming acquainted with the peculiar religion and culture of the Turks, would be resolute in their disdain for the Ottomans.

The threat that the Turks posed to Christian Europe in the first half of the sixteenth century was unprecedented. Never before had the Latin West, except when they invaded Muslim lands during the heyday of the crusades, been so close in physical proximity to the Muslim world. This confrontation, nevertheless, provided the impetus for the recasting of European approaches to the Muslim world. Catholic authors maintained the traditional approach of the medieval crusades. Lutheran authors unsparingly criticised this yet still saw a defence of the empire as a necessity. Thus, they insisted on a purely secular war led by the emperor as emperor and fought by soldiers as soldiers. The radical wing of the Reformation typically, though with many exceptions, rejected warfare of any form. The Turks, according to several figures, were not infidel enemies, but were potential brothers. According to Thomas Müntzer and others they were also God's apocalyptic tool of wrath and therefore were to be accepted as divinely autho-

---

[146] *Ausz Ratschlag Erasmi*, 16[r]: 'Die Türcke zwingen niemans in jrem land seinen glaube zuverleugen oder den jren anzunemen.'

[147] Jonas, *Danielis*, e4[r-v]: 'Ob auch wol etlich unerfaren leuth sagen er las jederman gleuben was er will so helt sichs doch nicht also das allen den ihenigen so er unter sein gewalt bringt da nimst er den eltern mit gewalt das dritte kind das mussen sien sehen und horen das jhr eizen liebesten kinder jhn dem schendlichen Mahometischen irrtumb ausser sagen und zu allen Turckischen sitten gewest und unterweiset werden.'

[148] See Miller, 'Holy War', 182–190.

rised executors of God's Final Judgement. Where the various figures of the sixteenth century were unanimous in suggested responses to the Turkish threat was in their insistence of a spiritual approach to the turmoil, for it was commonly thought that in one way or another God had sent the Turks to punish Christians for their moral depravity. If Christians repented of their sins and called on God for help then he would, according to Catholics, grant military success and, according to Protestants, sustain Christians in the faith regardless of what happened. Another proposed approach to the Turk in the sixteenth century, which never seemed to be realised, at least in the first half of the 1500s, was the sending of missionaries to Muslims, but, unlike the missionary friars of the Middle Ages, nothing ever happened. The intense physical conflict of the war with the Turks also gave rise to considerable interest in the religion of Islam and Turkish culture. Accordingly, a host of scholarly and popular literary works were produced. Probably the most important of these were the biographies of Muḥammad and the publication of the Qur'ān. Although they enabled those who were curious to find out more about their Turkish enemies, they probably also helped to reinforce popular perceptions of Islam. In any case, it was within this context, with Europe scrambling to repel the Turks and an increase in interest in their religion and culture, that Luther himself began to take notice of the Turks and Islam.

CHAPTER THREE

DIMENSIONS OF LUTHER'S THOUGHT ON THE TURKS

The previous chapter surveyed European responses to and perceptions of the Turks and Islam in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth century. In order to complement this, for no survey of early modern Europe would be complete without taking Luther into consideration, and especially to elucidate the factors that contributed to the Reformer's engagement with Islam this chapter will focus in on the dimensions of his thought concerning the Turks. In addition to his views on how Ottoman imperialism and the implicit proliferation of Islam should be handled, because it was such an integral aspect of his thought, Luther's interpretation of the rise of the Turks in light of history will also be covered.

Responding to Ottoman Imperialism

As tensions between the Habsburgs and the Ottomans mounted, Luther was forced by circumstances to address questions that arose concerning the right (Christian) response to the politico-military threat of the Turks. From the outset, Luther was convinced that God was using the Turks as a means to punish a doctrinally corrupt and morally lax Christendom, and, while he neither explicitly approved nor disapproved of military measures being taken against the Ottoman army in his earliest remarks, he rejected outright the idea of a crusade. In 1518 when asked by the imperial Elector Frederick the Wise's secretary, George Spalatin (1484–1545), what his opinion on the current plans of the papacy for a crusade against the Turks was,[1] he responded,

[1] In addition to pages 41–43 above, also see Pope Leo X's letter to Elector Frederick on 24 October 1518, which blames Luther, Satan's 'son of perdition', for obstructing the papacy's plans for a co-ordinated European 'crusade against the Turk's unholy wrath' (*LC* 1:126). On Spalatin, see *OER*, 4:96–99.

> If I rightly understand you, you ask whether an expedition against the Turks can be defended by me on biblical grounds. Even supposing the war should be undertaken for pious reasons rather than for gain, I confess that I cannot promise what you ask, but rather the opposite. … It seems to me, if we must have any Turkish war, we ought to begin with ourselves. In vain we wage carnal wars without, while at home we are conquered by spiritual battles. … Now that the Roman Curia is more tyrannical than any Turk, fighting with such portentous deeds against Christ and against his Church, and now that the clergy is sunk in the depths of avarice, ambition and luxury, and now that the face of the Church is everywhere most wretched, there is no hope of a successful war or of victory. As far as I can see, God fights against us; first, we must conquer him with tears, pure prayers, holy life and pure faith.[2]

The real threat to Europe and especially Christianity, according to Luther at this stage, was not the Turks, but instead the papacy's subjugation of the church to false doctrine. Although expressed initially in private correspondence, he soon made this opinion public. In the *Resolutiones disputationum de indulgentiarum virtute*, a copy of which was sent to Pope Leo X, who was determined to launch a crusade against the Turks, he wrote, 'Many … now dream of nothing else than war against the Turk. They want to fight, not against iniquities, but against the lash of iniquity and thus they would oppose God who says that through that lash he himself punishes us for our iniquities because we do not punish ourselves for them.'[3] The following year he reiterated this point again before the congregation at Wittenberg when, from the pulpit, he announced that, although he considered the conquest of Christian lands by the Turks most deplorable, Germany, free from the tyranny of the Turk, was in an equally depraved if not worse condition than it would be under the Ottomans. 'When seen rightly, we might well shudder more at the thought of our own life than at that of a hundred deaths' caused by the Turks. So rather than going to war, especially if it was conceived of as a crusade, Germany should, for the present, 'Let the Turks be Turks.' Indeed Christians should pray for protection from the enemies of Christ, but they should first seek to bring an end to the 'deserved plague' through repentant prayer and a return to right doctrine and practice.[4]

---

[2] WA Br 1:282.3–22 (*LC* 1:140–141).

[3] *Resolutiones disputationum de indulgentiarum virtute*, WA 1:535.35–39 (LW 31:92).

[4] *Auslegung deutsch des Vater unnser für dye einfeltigen leyen*, WA 2:96.4–5, 110.40–111.1 (LW 42:37–38, 55–56).

The idea that Germans needed to rout out their own infidelity and shake off the tyranny of the papacy before they addressed the Turkish threat was also expressed in Luther's other early pastoral writings. For example, in *Von den guten Werckenn* he suggested that 'Christendom is being destroyed not by the Turks, but by those who are supposed to defend it.'[5] The real danger to Latin Christianity was the Roman Church itself. Rather than preserving and defending what, in essence, defined and constituted the church—that is, its doctrine—the pope and his curia had invented their own dogmas. Thus, Luther urged that before Germany considered how to respond to the threat of Ottoman imperialism it should put its own affairs in order first. Using the term 'Turk' as a synonym for ungodliness and tyranny, he wrote in the first of his so-called reformation tracts from 1520, *An den Christlichen Adel deutscher Nation*, 'If we want to fight against the Turks, let us begin here where they are worst of all.'[6]

Luther's attack on the papacy in connection with the Turks naturally agitated those from the Church of Rome who sought his excommunication. He certainly failed to gain any sympathy for himself when, in 1520, he informed his readers that the true Turks were the Pope's servants in Rome, his 'lackeys and whores.'[7] In the same year he also publicly declared that the Pope was not only a 'tyrant' of Christianity but also the 'Antichrist',[8] a role often assigned to Muḥammad.[9] This, in addition to the controversy over theological and ecclesiastical authority beginning with his attack on indulgences, sealed Luther's fate. On 15 June 1520, the papal bull *Exsurge Domine* was issued and threatened

---

[5] *Von den guten Werckenn*, WA 6:242.3–5 (LW 44:70).

[6] *An den Christlichen Adel deutscher Nation von des Christlichen standes besserung*, WA 6:427.16–17 (LW 44:156).

[7] *Von den guten Werckenn*, WA 6:258.3–4 (LW 44:90). Since 1518, Luther had expressed in his personal correspondence that he was sure Rome was more tyrannical than the Turk. In addition to his letter to George Spalatin cited above (page 68), also see his letter to Wenzel Link (1483–1547), Johann Staupitz's successor as vicar general of the Augustinian Order, in WA Br 1:270.13–14.

[8] *Eyn Sermon von dem newen Testament*, WA 6:374.30 (LW 35:107). He had expressed this privately in 1518 (see WA Br 1:270.11–14).

[9] 'The thought of Mahomet as anti-Christ was a medieval commonplace' (Gordon Rupp, 'Luther against "The Pope, the Turk, and the Devil"', in Peter Brooks [ed.], *Seven-Headed Luther: Essays in Commemoration of a Quincentenary, 1483–1983* [Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1983], 259); Tolan, *Saracens*, 29, 88, 90–93; P. Alphandery, 'Mahomet-Anti Christ das le Moyen Age Latin', in *Melanges Harturig Derenbourg (1844–1908) Recueil de Travaux d'erudition Dedies a la Memoire d'hartwig Derenbourg par ses Amis et ses eleves* (Paris: Ernest Levoux, 1909), 261–277.

the Wittenberg Professor with excommunication if he failed to recant within 60 days of receiving it.[10] Among Luther's 41 alleged heretical and scandalous teachings denounced by the papacy was—appearing as number 34–a summary of an early statement he had made with regard to the Turks: 'To fight against the Turks is to fight against God's visitation upon our iniquities.'[11]

This accusation provided the occasion for an official statement of his position on how the Ottoman threat should be handled by Europe. In one of the four rebuttals that he wrote to the papal bull, the 1521 *Grund unnd ursach aller Artikel*, he explained:

> This article does not mean that we are not to fight against the Turk, as that holy manufacturer of heresies, the pope, charges. It means, rather, that we should first mend our ways and cause God to be gracious to us. We should not plunge into war, relying on the pope's indulgence, with which he has deceived Christians in the past and is deceiving them still. … All the pope accomplishes with his crusading indulgences and his promises of heaven is to lead Christians with their lives into death and with their souls into hell. This is, of course, the proper work of the Antichrist. God does not demand crusades, indulgences, and wars. He wants us to live good lives. But the pope and his followers run from goodness faster than from anything else, yet he wants to devour the Turk.

He concluded, sarcastically, by attributing the success of the Turks not to their military might but rather the papacy. 'This is the reason why our war against the Turk is so successful—so that where he formerly held one mile of land he now holds a hundred. But we still do not see it, so completely have we been taken in by this Roman leader of the blind.'[12]

---

[10] Luther did not receive the bull until just before 10 December 1520 whereupon he burned it. He was officially excommunicated on 3 January 1521 by the bull *Decet Romanum Pontificem*.

[11] 'Exsurge Domine', in Carl Mirbt (ed.), *Quellen zur Geschichte des Papsttums und das römische Katholizismus*, 2nd edn. (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 1901), 184: 'Proeliari adversus Turcas est repugnare Deo visitanti iniquitates nostras per illos.' Also see Pope Leo X's letter accompanying the copy of *Exsurge Domine* sent to Elector Frederick, which claims that Luther 'favours the Turks' (*LC* 1:334–335). John Cochlaeus, who depicted Luther as a turban-wearing Turk in his well-known picture of the seven-headed Luther, used this article to implicate the Reformer as contributing to Europe's inability to ward off the Ottomans in his 1529 *Dialogus de bello contra Turcas* (see Setton, 'Lutheranism', 142n9; for a reproduction of the picture of Luther with seven different heads, see, among others, Bobzin, *Der Koran*, 12).

[12] *Grund unnd ursach aller Artikel D Mart: Luther*, WA 7:443.19–33 (LW 32:89–91); cf. *Assertio omnium articulorum M. Lutheri per Bullam Leonis X*, WA 7:141.7–8, 24–25.

At this point, in early 1521, Luther had denied the legitimacy of a crusade, but as *Grund unnd ursach* made plain he was not necessarily opposed to a military response to Ottoman expansion. However, he still had yet to explicitly mention what shape such a response should take. There was no need to, for prior to the summer of 1521 eastern Europe north of the Danube River had remained free from Turkish aggression, but circumstances changed in August 1521. Shortly after inheriting the sultanate, Süleyman attacked and conquered Belgrade and thereby paved the way for further incursions into Hungary. During the course of the following decade the Ottomans continued to fight their way up the Danube through the plains of Mohács and into Buda and Pest until they reached the gates of Vienna in 1529.[13] It was in this period that the question of whether or not Germany should engage the Ottomans militarily took on a new dimension. Before, military action would have constituted offensive measures, which were proposed in terms of a crusade, but now the question was: how should Europe respond if the Turks threatened the security of the German Empire?

From this point forward Luther began to take the question of the legitimacy of warfare in general and a military response to the Ottomans in particular more seriously. His tract *Von welltlicher Uberkeyt* (1523), although it was primarily concerned with the relationship between the individual Christian and the state, gave a preliminary answer. After rhetorically asking whether a prince or any other governing official might legitimately go to war, and whether their Christian subjects were obliged to follow, Luther suggested that if a foreign government was disrupting the general peace the first measures to be taken should be negotiations to re-establish 'justice and peace.' If such appeals were refused the ruler of that nation was obliged to defend his people 'against force by force.' To secular officials, in particular, he wrote,

> In doing this you must not consider your personal interests and how you may remain lord, but those of your subjects to whom you owe help and protection, that such action may proceed in love. Since your entire land is in peril you must make the venture, so that with God's help all may not be lost. If you cannot prevent some from becoming widows and orphans as a consequence, you must at least see that not everything goes to ruin until there is nothing left except widows and orphans.

Continuing, he addressed Christian citizens.

---

[13] See pages 35–37 above.

> In this matter subjects are in duty bound to follow, and to devote their life and property, for in such a case one must risk his goods and himself for the sake of others. In a war of this sort it is both Christian and an act of love to kill the enemy without hesitation, to plunder and burn and injure him by every method of warfare until he is conquered (except that one must beware of sin, and not violate wives and virgins). And when victory has been achieved, one should offer mercy and peace to those who surrender and humble themselves.[14]

It was a 'Christian act of love to kill the enemy' in the sense that, since Christians are obligated to love and serve their neighbors, those who were called to secular vocations such as the military were therefore bound to protect them against the unjust onslaught of the Turks.

Three years later, in *Ob Kriegsleute auch ynn seligem stande* (1526), when Luther addressed issues concerning Christians in military vocations he argued similarly. He also provided a simple, clear explanation of a 'just war' (*recht krieg*), which stated that just as it was necessary for secular governments to punish or wield the sword against law-breakers within its jurisdiction, it was also necessary to wield the sword against foreign ones.

> For what is just war but the punishment of evildoers and the maintenance of peace? If one punishes a thief or a murderer or an adulterer, that is punishment inflicted on a single evildoer; but in a just war a whole crowd of evildoers, who are doing harm in proportion to the size of the crowd, are punished at once. If, therefore, one work of the sword is good and right, they are all good and right, for the sword is a sword and not a foxtail with which to tickle people.

He even called the 'office of the sword' a 'divine and useful ordinance.'[15] At the end of the treatise, he noted how he particularly wanted to address the *Turkisschen kriege* 'because it has come so close to us.' Also, he wanted to clarify his position on the war again because not only had it been misrepresented by the papacy in the past but it was also currently being misunderstood by his followers, who were 'advising against war with the Turk' and misquoting his writings to do so. Instead, however, he decided to let the matter rest, but if one should wonder whether he condoned war against the Turks he suggested that his readers read the present treatise or *Von welltlicher Uberkeyt*. Therein they would see

[14] *Von welltlicher Uberkeyt*, WA 11:277.9–23 (LW 45:124–125).
[15] *Ob Kriegsleute auch ynn seligem stande*, WA 19:628.23–29, 629.14–15 (LW 46:98–99).

that he condoned warfare when it was rightly conceived and its aims were to merely bring an end to injustice and disorder.[16]

While Luther condoned warfare he still had yet to endorse, in no uncertain terms, military action against the Ottomans. Thus, as he continued to hear reports of evangelical pastors throughout Saxony preaching absolute pacifism, not only did he further his endorsement of a just war 'against those who start an unjust war.' Working with Melanchthon, he also began to specifically approve of Christian service in the war against the Turks. He did this initially in his 1528 instruction manual for the young Lutheran Churches of Saxony, *Unterricht der Visitatorn*. Between the articles on 'Christian freedom' and 'Daily Worship' he condemned what he called the reckless sedition of pastors who taught that Christians should not offer up any resistance against Turkish military raids. It was true, he confessed, that Christians were forbidden by Scripture to 'exercise personal and individual vengeance', but, by contrast, civil officials and their Christian subjects were not only permitted but commanded to execute the 'vengeance of God' against Turkish campaigns into Hungary.

> Since the authorities are to honor good and punish evil works according to Rom. 13[:4] and I Pet. 2[:14], it is their duty to make defense against those who would destroy the worship of God, the peaceful order of the country, law, and justice. On this account we are to defend ourselves against the Turks, who not only seek to destroy countries, violate and murder women and children, but also to obliterate justice and divine worship and all forms of good order, so that the survivors afterward may have no security, and the children may not be brought up in discipline and virtue.

Although he cited Scripture in support of his position, he noted that this was not a Christian prerogative *per se*.

> Even if there were no Christian faith we would yet need to war against the Turks for the sake of our wives and children. For we would rather choose death than to see and tolerate such shame and vice among our own. For the Turks drive the people to market, buy and sell and use them as animals, be they man or woman, young or old, married or unmarried—so evil is the Turkish nature.

Luther concluded this section in the *Unterricht der Visitatorn* with a summary of what pastors should preach regarding the Turkish threat. In addition to praying for deliverance from the 'destructive nation' of the

---

[16] *Ob Kriegsleute*, WA 19:662.9–22 (LW 46:136–137).

Turks, he instructed them to 'explain to [the laity] what a rightful service it is before God to fight against the Turks when the authorities so command.'[17]

To make his endorsement of a military response against the Ottomans known to a wider audience than the clergy of Saxony Luther drafted the first of his so-called Turkish writings (*Türckenbüchlein*). He began *Vom kriege widder die Türcken* (1529) by noting that for five years friends had urged him to write on war against the Turks, 'especially since there are some stupid preachers among us Germans … who are making the people believe that we ought not and must not fight.' 'Some', he continued, 'are even so foolish as to say that it is not proper for Christians to bear the temporal sword or to be rulers.' And, still further, 'some actually want the Turk to come and rule because they think our German people are wild and uncivilized.' Now, he concluded, it was finally time to 'write about these things' both for his 'own sake and that of the gospel … so that innocent consciences may no longer be deceived … into believing that [they] must not fight against the Turks.'[18] In this tract, Luther whole-heartedly condoned a defensive war against the Turks under the condition that it was led by the emperor as the supreme secular official of Germany and not as the 'head of Christendom or defender of the gospel or the faith.' He even cautioned the secular officials who would plan such a war not to underestimate the magnitude of the task.

> Fighting against the Turk is not like fighting against the king of France, or the Venetians, or the pope; he is a different kind of warrior. The Turk has people and money in abundance; he defeated the [Mamlūk] Sultan twice in succession and that took people![19] Why, dear sir, his people are always under arms so that he can quickly muster three or four hundred thousand men. If we were to cut down a hundred thousand, he would soon be back again with as many men as before.

This assessment was no exaggeration, he noted, so he urged the European powers to put their internal affairs in order and then to unite against their common enemy.

---

[17] *Unterricht der Visitatorn an die Pfarhern ym Kurfurstenthum zu Sachssen*, WA 26:228.33–229.46 (LW 40:305–306).

[18] *Vom kriege*, WA 30/2:107.5–108.15 (LW 46:161–162). For an example of such 'seditious' opinions, see 'The Trial and Martyrdom of Michael Sattler', in George H. Williams (ed.), *Spiritual and Anabaptist Writers: Documents Illustrative of the Radical Reformation* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1957), 138–144.

[19] This refers to Sultan Selim's 1517 and 1518 conquests of Syria and Egypt.

> I do not say this to frighten the kings from waging war against the Turk, but to admonish them to make wise and serious preparation, and not to go about this matter so childishly and lethargically, for I would like, if possible, to prevent useless bloodshed and lost wars. The best preparation would be if our princes would wind up their own affairs and put their heads and hearts and hands and feet together and make one body out of the great crowd from which one could make another army if one battle were lost, and not, as before, let individual kings and princes set upon him—yesterday the king of Hungary, today the king of Poland, and tomorrow the king of Bohemia—until the Turk devours them one after another and nothing is accomplished except that our people are betrayed and slaughtered and blood is shed needlessly.

Most importantly, however, Luther instructed his readers, as he had from the beginning, that they must first fight by spiritual means. 'This fight must be begun with repentance, and we must reform our lives, or we shall fight in vain.' Furthermore, one must constantly call out to God for help and, as an example, not in long drawn out prayers but 'frequent brief sighs, in one or two words, such as, "O help us, dear God the Father; have mercy on us, dear Lord Jesus Christ!" or the like.'

Luther's insistence that the emperor should lead the war against the Turks solely as emperor was more than a pronouncement on his vocational duties. It was also an attack on the idea of the crusades. He explained that what had caused him to maintain relative silence about war against the Turks in earlier years was because he wanted to separate himself as much as possible from the papists who sought to fight the Turks under the guise of a crusade. 'What motivated me', he wrote, was that 'they undertook to fight against the Turk in the name of Christ, and taught and incited men to do this, as though our people were an army of Christians against the Turks, who were enemies of Christ.' He considered this to be 'absolutely contrary to Christ's doctrine and name' and 'the greatest of all sins.' Therefore, Luther argued that traditional incitements to war against the Turks based on their infidel religion should be abandoned. To 'wipe out the Turk's religion' was not the duty of the military but rather one should fight 'unbelief with word and with prayer.' If it was the emperor's duty to wipe out heresy and unbelief 'he would have to begin with the pope, bishops, and clergy.' So he insisted that the emperor 'let the Turk believe and live as he will, just as one lets the papacy and other false Christians live.'[20]

---

[20] *Vom kriege*, WA 30/2:111.13–28, 130.22–131.17 (LW 46:165, 185–186).

Vom kriege, writes Martin Brecht, is 'a carefully crafted example of Luther's distinction between the two kingdoms.'[21] The general framework of this aspect of Luther's thought was set forth already in his tracts *Von welltlicher Uberkeyt* and *Ob Kriegsleute*.[22] A passage from the latter explains the basic concept of this multi-dimensional teaching.

> God has established two kinds of government among men. The one is spiritual; it has no sword, but it has the word, by means of which men are to become good and righteous, so that with this righteousness they may attain eternal life. He administers this righteousness through the word, which he has committed to the preachers. The other kind is worldly government, which works through the sword so that those who do not want to be good and righteous to eternal life may be forced to become good and righteous in the eyes of the world. He administers this righteousness through the sword. … Thus God himself is the founder, lord, master, protector, and rewarder of both kinds of righteousness. There is no human ordinance or authority in either, but each is a divine thing entirely.[23]

Applied to the Ottoman threat, Luther offered the following suggestions to those in positions of worldly authority in the latter pages of *Vom kriege*. 'Here is what should be done', he wrote. In keeping with their duties, Charles V and his princes should lead the charge against the Turks. They were the ones entrusted by God with the duty of wielding the sword. Although the office of secular rulership was a divine institution, 'whether they themselves were Christians or not' did not matter for their duties were limited to maintaining civil justice and righteousness alone. Thus, he wrote, the 'emperor is not the head of Christendom or defender of the gospel or the faith.' Christians certainly needed to pray against the 'Turks' Allah', but they were not to fight the Turks physically as the faithful fighting infidels. Rather, they ought to fight as imperial subjects under the emperors' banner and not under the banner of Christ. 'If I were a soldier and saw a priest's banner in the field, or a banner of the cross, even though it was a crucifix', he added, 'I

---

[21] Martin Brecht, *Martin Luther: Shaping and Defining the Reformation, 1521–1532*, trans. James Schaaf (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1990), 365.

[22] In addition to pages 154–156 below, for a lucid overview of Luther's doctrine of the two kingdoms, see David Steinmetz, 'Luther and the Two Kingdoms', in *Luther in Context*, 2nd edn. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2002), 112–125. On the specific politico-historical context in which this doctrine was developed, see James M. Estes, 'Luther on the Role of Secular Authority in the Reformation', *LQ* 17 (2003), 199–225.

[23] *Ob Kriegsleute*, WA 19:629.17–630.2 (LW 46:99–100).

should run as though the Devil were chasing me.' But 'if the banner of Emperor Charles or of a prince is in the field, then let everyone run boldly and gladly to the banner to which his allegiance is sworn.'[24]

Luther offered further suggestions for fighting off the Ottomans in his *Eine Heerpredigt widder den Türcken*, which was written in the aftermath of the first assault on Vienna. Only, in this tract he encouraged everyone to lend a hand in staving off the Turks.

> I wish … that all Germans were of such a mind that they would allow no small town or village to be plundered or led away [into captivity] by the Turks, but, when it comes time to struggle and fight, that those who would defend themselves would do so, young and old, men and women, man-servant and maidservant, until they are killed, burning their own house and home and destroying everything.[25]

He continued by offering counsel to the consciences of those who would be called upon to kill the enemy. Such a person should know that they were merely defending themselves 'against the Turks in a war started by them', which they were entitled and even obligated to do. Also, they should not hesitate in defending their lives and their property for fear that they might spill innocent blood, for in battling the Turks one was 'fighting against an enemy of God and a blasphemer of Christ, indeed, the Devil himself.' Moreover, one should not worry about killing a Christian who had enlisted or been forced to serve in the Turkish army, for they had willingly taken part in an unjust war led by a nation that 'has been condemned to hell-fire as an enemy of Christ and his holy ones.'[26] So strong was Luther's conviction for the defense of the empire that he was himself willing to 'struggle even unto death against the Turks.'[27]

Luther's unbridled support of a defensive war against the Ottomans coupled with his appeal that Christians pray for a return to right doctrine and, only secondarily, an amendment of morals remained con-

---

[24] *Vom kriege*, WA 30/2:115.17–28, 130.22–34 (LW 46:169, 185–186).

[25] *Heerpredigt*, WA 30/2:183.18–24: 'Jch wolt wündschen … das alle Deudschen so gesinnet weren, das sich kein flecklin noch dörfflin plundern noch weg füren liessen vom Türcken, Sondern wenns zu solchem ernst und not keme, das sich werete was sich weren kind, iung und alt, man und weib, knecht und magd, bis das sie alle erwürget würden, dazu selbs haus und hoff abbrenneten und alles verderbeten, das die Türcken nichts fünden.'

[26] *Heerpredigt*, WA 30/2:173.4–5, 9: '[E]r widder Gottes feind und Christus lesterer, ia widder den teuffel selbs streit … einen feind Christi und seiner heiligen zum hellischen für verurteilet hat.'

[27] WA Br 5:167.18–19 (*LC* 2:503).

tinuous themes in his writings on the Turks for the remainder of his life. For example, in 1538, after a respite from any serious attacks by the Ottomans of more than 5 years, he was impelled to address the problem again as rumours were circulating about another impending attack upon Vienna. He thus encouraged pastors to incite their congregations to repent and pray against the Turks so that God might curtail his judgement upon Christians and, in 1541, he called for Christians to do all they could to their last breath in repelling the Turks.[28]

Even though he gave his hearty approval to war against the Turks he began to express caution for those entering into it lightly and with coarse arrogance. He continuously reiterated that soldiers especially should approach their military duties with humility and the fear of God.[29] 'I have completely despaired of those who wish to go to war against the Turks and do so with vicious, shameful, and all kinds of wanton anger against the Turks themselves. I know that God neither will nor can grant victory when such people fight for us.'[30] As it turned out, in the mid-1540s, negotiations were made for a peace between the Ottomans and Europe. While the threat against Germany from the Turks was minimised, another threat seemed to be looming on the horizon. Upon hearing of recent efforts by various European powers to secure peace with Süleyman and the Turks, Luther began to detect an unholy alliance forming, which he suspected was a sign of the soon approaching *eschaton*. On 17 July 1545, seven months before his death, he wrote to his close friend Nicholas Amsdorf,

> The Pope, the Emperor, the Frenchman, and Ferdinand have dispatched a very splendid legation, loaded down with precious gifts, to the Turks for the purpose of establishing peace. The nicest thing about this is the fact that in order not to offend the eyes of the Turks, all of the envoys have laid aside their native clothing and have decked themselves out in long tunics, according to the custom of the Turks. It is said that they departed from Venice on June 21. These are the people who until now

---

[28] See, respectively, *Eine Vermahnung an alle Pfarrherrn*, WA 50:485–487; *Vermahnung zum Gebet wider den Türcken*, WA 51:585–625 (LW 43:213–241); *Allen Pfarrherrn unsern lieben Herrn und Brüdern jn Christo Gnade und friede jm Herrn*, WA 53:553–560.

[29] See, for example, his letter to Joachim of Brandenburg (1484–1535), who was chosen to lead the Habsburg army in a campaign to push the Ottomans away from the borders of royal Hungary in the Spring of 1542, WA Br 10:66–67.

[30] *Verlegung*, WA 53:392.35–393.2: 'Denn ich gantz und gar verzweivelt habe an denen, so wider den Türcken kriegen wollen Und doch mit lestern, unzucht und allerley mutwillen erger sind weder die Türcken selbs, Als der ich weis das Gott nicht wird noch kan glück geben, wo solche leute fur uns kriegen.'

> have decried the Turk as the enemy of the Christian name, and using this pretext have wrung money from the people and agitated the inhabitants of their territories against the Turks. In order to make war against the Turks, the Roman Satan has bled the world of its money by means of indulgences, annates, and endless sly thievery. What Christians, or rather hellish idols of the Devil! I hope that these are very cheerful signs of the nearness of the end of all things. Therefore, while they worship the Turk, let us shout to the true God who will listen to us, and who through the splendor of his future arrival will humiliate even the Turk, along with them.[31]

While Luther's hope for the second advent of Christ was never realised, with the *status quo* temporarily secured in Hungary as a result of these negotiations Emperor Charles V was finally able to devote his attention to the Lutheran heresy and defeat the Protestant princes in the Schmalkaldian War.[32]

The Apocalyptic Nature of the Turkish Threat

Luther's writings from the beginning until the end of his career are laced with apocalyptic overtones and eschatological fervour. His 'central presupposition' when he looked out at the world was that 'history is ultimately the arena in which God and Satan struggle.'[33] In fact, as Heiko Oberman, the late *magister* of Reformation history, convincingly argued, Luther viewed himself as one caught up within this struggle as 'the apocalyptic prophet at the end of time, placed in the increasing power struggle between God and the Devil.'[34] Elsewhere, Oberman added that 'we can say with certainty of Luther that if we sweep away his apocalypticism, his theology will make no sense to us.'[35] Thus, a

---

[31] WA Br 11:143.16–29 (LW 50:272). Also see his similar comments to his other confidant Justus Jonas, WA Br 11:142.11–21 (LW 50:269–270). Cf. WA Br 11:143n7; LW 50:270n12; Setton, 'Lutheranism', 164.

[32] Fischer-Galati, *Imperialism*, 57–96.

[33] Lohse, *Martin Luther*, 195.

[34] Heiko Oberman, 'Teufelsdreck: Eschatology and Scatology in the "Old" Luther', in *The Impact of the Reformation* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1994), 64. Also see his 'Martin Luther: Forerunner of the Reformation', in *The Reformation: Roots and Ramifications*, trans. Andrew Gow (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1994), 23–52 and especially his celebrated biography *Luther: Man between God and the Devil*, trans. Eileen Walliser-Schwarzbart (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989).

[35] Heiko Oberman, 'Martin Luther: Between the Middle Ages and the Modern

brief but thorough explanation of the place of the Turks in his theology of history is necessary.

Luther's conviction that the end of the world was nigh was the result of several factors. The most significant indicator to him that the age-old struggle between God and Satan was coming to an end was the restoration of the gospel in the church, but also the continued resistance to the gospel by the papacy and even the Jews.[36] And in connection to this, Turkish expansion into central Europe was likewise a sign that Satan had been permitted to wage his final assault upon the elect.

This aspect of Luther's perception of the Ottoman threat underwent a subtle although significant shift in the year 1529 between the publications of *Vom kriege* and the *Heerpredigt*. In the former treatise he identified the Turks as both the 'rod of the wrath of the Lord' and the 'servant of the raging Devil.'[37] Although this association seems paradoxical, it coheres with Luther's 'peculiar conception' of the Devil. As George Forell writes, 'For Luther the devil was always God's devil, i.e., in attempting to counteract God the devil ultimately serves God.'[38] In other words, the Turks, according to Luther, were servants of the Devil because they had initiated a war not 'from necessity or to protect [their] land' but instead to 'rob and ravage … lands which do and have done nothing to him.' The disruption of peace and justice in the natural order was the Devil's *modus operandi*.[39] In carrying this out, however, the Devil and the Turks, unbeknownst to them, were also carrying out God's plan to punish both those who continued to persecute the gospel, particularly the papacy, and those who remained unrepentant and stubbornly rejected it. Although Luther called Ottoman campaigns in Hungary 'an outrage', they were still being used as a rod 'with which God is punishing the world, as he often does through wicked scoundrels, and sometimes through godly people.'[40]

Times', in *The Reformation: Roots and Ramifications*, trans. Andrew Gow (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1994), 62.

[36] See John Headley, *Luther's View of Church History* (London: Yale University Press, 1963), 224–265.

[37] *Vom kriege*, WA 30/2:116.26–27 (LW 46:170).

[38] George Forell, 'Luther and the War Against the Turks', in William Russell (ed.), *Martin Luther, Theologian of the Church: Collected Essays* (St. Paul: Luther Seminary, 1994), 127.

[39] George Forell, 'Luther's Conception of Natural Orders', in William Russell (ed.), *Martin Luther, Theologian of the Church: Collected Essays* (St. Paul: Luther Seminary, 1994), 73.

[40] *Vom kriege*, WA 30/2:116.9–17 (LW 46:170).

A greater apocalyptic role was assigned to the Turks in *Heerpredigt*. In the first portion of the sermon Luther identified the Turks as playing an integral part in the beginning of the End Times.[41] Addressing his *lieben deudschen*, he explained that he wanted them to know the true nature of the Ottoman Empire 'according to the Scripture.'[42] The text that Luther based his assessment upon was the Old Testament prophet Daniel's vision of four beasts emerging from the sea (recorded in chapter 7), which is well summarized by John Baldwin:

> In Daniel 7:2–14 the prophet sees four beasts of prey, each of a different species, arise sequentially out of the sea. Thus, in turn, a lion with eagle's wings, a bear grasping three ribs in its mouth, a winged leopard with four heads, and finally a beast of unidentified species but of great ferocity, follow one another from the ocean. The fourth creature is not only equipped with iron teeth by which it devours all its enemies, the beast also sports no less than ten horns. The subsequent activity among the horns becomes the central focus of the vision. So a little horn pushes itself up among the ten horns uprooting three in the process. The little horn itself is a striking hermaphroditic entity, composed not only of horn material but also of human eyes and a blaspheming mouth. This odd horn battles against the saints on earth until the Ancient of Days comes and destroys it and sets up an everlasting kingdom given to the saints.[43]

Each of the four beasts of Daniel's vision represent four different, consecutive empires (*keiserthum*), which he identified as the Assyrian and Babylonians, the Persians and Medes, the Greeks under Alexander the Great, and finally the fourth and final one was 'certainly and without a doubt' the Holy Roman Empire.[44] The ten horns, protruding from the fourth beast's head were the kingdoms (*königreich*) of Spain, France, Italy, North Africa, Egypt, Syria, Asia Minor, Greece, Germany, and England.[45] And the little horn was none other than the kingdom of

---

[41] On the impetus for this move, including Luther's acquaintance with Johannes Hilten's writings, see, among others, Headley, *Luther's View*, 245–246; John Baldwin, 'Luther's Eschatological Appraisal of the Turkish Threat in *Eine Heerpredigt wider den Türken*', *AUSS* 33:2 (1995), 196; Forell, 'Luther and the War', 123; Williams, '*Salus extra Ecclesia*', 133.

[42] *Heerpredigt*, WA 30/2:161.31–162.1: 'Das gewissen zu unterrichten dienet wol zursachen, das man gewis sey, Was der Tuercke sey und wofuer er zurhalten sey nach der schrifft.'

[43] Baldwin, 'Luther's Eschatological Appraisal', 197.

[44] *Heerpredigt*, WA 30/2:166.1–9.

[45] *Heerpredigt*, WA 30/2:166.28–29; cf. *Vorrede uber den Propheten Daniel*, WA DB 11/2:12.15.

Muḥammad (*Mahometh reich*), which under the Arabs or 'Saracens' had long ago uprooted the two horns or kingdoms of Asia and Egypt and, in Turkish dress, had recently conquered the third horn or kingdom of Greece.[46]

Luther was so certain of his interpretation of Daniel 7 that he even suggested the meaning behind what Baldwin described above as the 'hermaphroditic' qualities of the little horn. Its 'human eyes' were symbolic of the Qurʾān, for the law of Muḥammad, Luther charged, lacked the 'divine eye.' Instead it 'teaches nothing different than what human wisdom and reason can accept.'[47] The horn's blasphemous mouth was synonymous for the false teachings of Islam, especially its claim that Muḥammad had brought an end to the doctrines of Christianity.[48] And Daniel's vision of the battles taking place between this kingdom and the saints was, of course, a prophecy of Europe's ongoing struggle with the Turk, most recently at the gates of Vienna. By revealing the true identity of the Ottomans from the prophecy of Daniel, Luther had also disclosed something even more telling and perhaps promising. Since the little horn was the last one to appear before the Ancient of Days destroyed it, prior to establishing his own everlasting kingdom, he was convinced that the Last Days were at hand. He expressed this in his dedicatory letter to his translation of Daniel when he wrote,

> The world is running faster and faster, hastening towards its end, so that I often have the strong impression that the Last Days may break before we have turned the holy Scriptures into German. For this is sure: there are no more temporal events to wait for according to the Scriptures. It has all happened, all has been fulfilled—the Roman Empire is finished, the Turk has come to the peak of his power, the power of the Pope is about to crash—and the world is cracking to pieces as though it would tumble down … for if the world were to linger on, as it has been, then

[46] *Heerpredigt*, WA 30/2:167.7–10.

[47] *Heerpredigt*, WA 30/2:168.15–23: 'Das horn Menschen augen, das ist, des Mahometh Alkoran odder gesetz damit er regirt, Jnn welchem gesetz ist kein Göttlich auge … Denn sein gesetz leret nichts anders, denn was menschliche witze und vernunfft wol leiden kan.'

[48] *Heerpredigt*, WA 30/2:168-24-169.4. This interpretation of the fourth beast and eleven horns of Daniel was not a unique idea beginning with Luther (Setton, 'Lutheranism', 153). It was, in fact, widespread amongst his colleagues (see Köhler, *Melanchthon*, 20–23; Harvey Buchanan, 'Luther and the Turks, 1519–1529', *ARG* 47:2 [1956], 157), and can be traced back to the seventh century during the Arab conquest of the Levant and North Africa. See Walter Kaegi, 'Initial Byzantine Reactions to the Arab Conquest', *CH* 38 (1969), 141.

> surely all the world would go Muḥammadan or Epicurean, and there would be no more Christians left.[49]

And again in the preface, he added, 'certainly we have nothing to wait for now except the Last Day, for the Turk will not knock off more than these three horns.'[50]

Luther also found other prophecies that he thought described the Ottoman Empire as a key player in the events of the End Times. The most explicit of these were found in chapter 20 of John's Apocalypse and chapters 38 and 39 of the Old Testament prophet Ezekiel.[51] Both, like Daniel 7:21, depicted a final assault on the saints of God by the 'last tyrant' of Christ's elect named Gog and Magog,[52] who were, according to Luther, none other than the Turks.[53] While Luther was sure that the events described in Daniel, Ezekiel, and the Apocalypse were taking place, he was hopeful that the battle would be short lived for all three prophesies also predicted the imminent demise of the Turks.[54]

Perhaps not so surprisingly Luther rarely spoke about the Turks in this regard without mentioning the papacy.[55] His colleagues recorded him as suggesting that both were the Antichrist. 'The Pope is the spirit of the Antichrist, and the Turk is the flesh of the Antichrist. They both help each other to choke [us], the latter with body and sword, the former with doctrine and spirit.'[56] In his own writings, however, particularly after he began to specifically address the Turkish

---

[49] *Widmungsbrief zu seiner Danielübersetzung*, WA DB 11/2:381.4–11, 25–27: 'Die wellt leufft vnd eilet so trefflich seer zu yhrem ende, das mir offt starcke gedancken einfallen, als solte der iungste tag, ehe daher brechen, denn wir die heiligen schrifft gar aus verdeudschen kundten, Denn das ist gewis, Das wir ynn der heiligen schrifft nichts mehr zeitlichs dings zu gewarten haben, Es ist alles aus vnd erfullet, Das Romisch reich ist am ende, Der Turcke auffs hohest komen, die pracht des Bapstumbs fellet dahin, vnd knacket die wellt an allen enden fast, als wolt sie schier brechen vnd fallen … Denn wo die wellt hette lenger so stehen sollen, wie sie vorhin stund, were gewis alle wellt Mahometisch odder Epicurisch worden, vnd were kein Christen mehr blieben.'

[50] *Vorrede uber den Prophete Daniel*, WA DB 11/2:12.21–22 (LW 35:300).

[51] See Miller, 'Luther on the Turks', 93.

[52] *Vorrede auff den Propheten Hesekiel*, WA DB 11/1:393.33–34 (LW 35:283).

[53] See Luther's forward to *Das XXXVIII. Und XXXIX. Capitel Hesechiel vom Gog*, WA 30/2:223.7–8. Arabs also interpreted the rise of the Turks apocalyptically; see Bernard Lewis, *Islam from the Prophet Muhammad to the Capture of Constantinople* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), 122.

[54] See *Vorrede auff die offenbarung Sanct Johannis*, WA DB 7:415.18–24; *Hesechiel vom Gog*, WA 30/2:226.1–11; *Heerpredigt*, WA 30/2:166.30–167.7; 170.29–30; 171.2–7, 18–29; WA Br 5:176.4–177.15 (*LC* 2:502–503).

[55] See, for example, Rupp, 'Luther against "The Turk"', 256–273.

[56] WA TR 1:135.15–17: 'Papa est spiritus Antichristi, et Turca est caro Antichristi. Sie

threat, he viewed the Pope as the Antichrist whereas the Turks were another sort of demonic aberration.[57] Along with the rest of the Muslim world, they were followers of the beast of Apocalypse 20:10, which was Muḥammad. The situation, according to Luther's exegesis of the passage, was thus: Muḥammad's kingdom (the beast) reigned in the East and the papacy (the false prophet or Antichrist) reigned in the West.[58] Both were poised under the command of Satan waiting for orders to commence the final assault upon the church. 'Because the end of the world is at hand', he wrote, 'the Devil must attack Christendom with both of his forces.'[59] Yet, interestingly and probably due to proximity, Luther almost always viewed the papacy as a bigger threat than Muḥammad and the Turks. He often remarked that compared to the Pope, 'Muḥammad appears before the world as a pure saint.'[60] Nevertheless, both played an integral role in his eschatological view of history and his assessment of the nature of the Turkish threat.

While such an outlook is wholly foreign to modern minds, it was 'not merely an outburst of Luther's anger, but also a firm theological position',[61] and, moreover, as Heiko Oberman suggested, was not purposeful propaganda used to excite the common folk but was very much a concrete reality for Luther.[62] As such, it cannot be divorced from his engagement with Islam on the theologcal level.

Treason, Apostasy, and Apologetics

The apocalyptic battle between God and Satan manifested physically in the assaults of the kingdoms of Muḥammad and the pope against the kingdom of Christ raised some very real practical concerns for

---

helffen beyde einander wurgen, hic corpore et gladio, ille doctrina et spiritu'; cf. WA TR 3:158.31–35.

[57] For example, see his first work on the Turks, *Vom kriege*, WA 30/2:126.1–3 (LW 46:181). Also see *Verlegung des Alcoran*, WA 53:394.31: 'Ich halt den Mahmet nicht fur den Endechrist.'

[58] *Vermahnung zum Gebet wider den Türcken*, WA 51:620.27–32, 621.17–18; *Verlegung des Alcoran*, WA 53:392.19–25, 294:9–17; *Heerpredigt*, WA 30/2:162.1–11.

[59] *Heerpredigt*, WA 30/2:162.11–13: 'Also must der teuffel, weil der welt ende fürhanden ist, die Christenheit zuvor mit beyder seiner macht … angreiffen.'

[60] *Verlegung des Alcoran*, WA 53:396.16–17: 'Das Mahmet möchte fur der Welt schier heilig gegen jm sein.'

[61] Grislis, 'Luther and the Turks', 275.

[62] See Oberman, 'Teufelsdreck', 66–68.

Luther. Upon close investigation, his writings reveal an intense concern with the prospect of Christians making contact with Muslim Turks.[63] Even before the siege on Vienna he had heard reports of Hungarians and Germans offering their services to the Turk[64] and, in some cases, willingly submitting to Ottoman rule. Not only did he regard this as an act of treason, but he also thought that it would open up avenues for the proliferation of Islam in Europe. And it was this threat—the extension of the domain of Islam—that aroused a deep-seated fear, for Luther thought that if the Turks made their way farther into Europe, Christians would for various reasons begin committing apostasy and convert to Islam. While certainly encouraged by his apocalypticism, the notion that the world was 'going Muḥammadan' was not borne out of fear alone. Rather, his perception was also informed by reflecting on the geopolitical context. As the late Marshall G.S. Hodgson noted, 'In the sixteenth century … a visitor from Mars might well have supposed that the human world was on the verge of becoming Muslim. He would have based his judgment partly on the strategic and political advantages of the Muslims, but partly on the vitality of their general culture.'[65]

The strength and vitality of the Ottoman Turks is generally referred to by Ottomanists as *Pax Ottomanica*. While the concept is a modern term used to describe generally the 'age of satisfaction of the basic desiderata and needs of the inhabitants of the Ottoman Empire' from about 1453 to 1600,[66] central Europeans and even Germans were apparently well aware of, and even admired, the 'wealth, splendour, power, simplicity, and rapidity of action' of lands governed by the Ottomans.[67] Luther himself had heard rumours to this effect in as early as 1520. In *An den Christlichen Adel*, he noted how word had been cir-

---

[63] A few scholars have mentioned this aspect of Luther's thought in connection with the Ottoman threat in passing. For example, see Grislis, 'Luther and the Turks', 280–281; Setton, 'Lutheranism', 160–161. On Luther's interest in Hungary and the Balkans in general, see Karl Völker, 'Luther und der Osten Europa', *LuJ* 15 (1933), 113–138.

[64] For examples of this, see Setton, 'Lutheranism', 161.

[65] Marshall G.S. Hodgson, 'The Role of Islam in World History', in Edmund Burke III (ed.), *Rethinking World History: Essays on Europe, Islam, and World History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 97.

[66] Stephen Fischer-Galati, 'Judeo-Christian Aspects of *Pax Ottomanica*', in Béla Király (ed.), *Tolerance and Movements of Religious Dissent in Eastern Europe* (Boulder: East European Quarterly, 1975), 185.

[67] Albert Lybyer, *The Government of the Ottoman Empire in the Time of Suleiman the Magnificent* (New York: Russell & Russell, 1966), 18. For a sharp critique of the term *Pax Ottomanica*, see Alexander Unghváry, *The Hungarian Protestant Reformation in the Sixteenth Century under the Ottoman Impact* (Lampeter: Edwin Mellen, 1989), 16–24.

culating that 'there is no better temporal rule anywhere than among the Turks.'[68] As tensions were on the rise between the Habsburgs and Ottomans he similarly reported, 'I hear it said that in Germany there are those who desire the coming of the Turk and his government because they would rather be under him than under the emperor or princes.' Such an attitude was, according to Luther, 'party to serious and innumerable sins in God's sight.' Those who expressed this opinion and, especially, who were willing to submit to the Ottomans without a fight should they reach Germany, he continued, 'ought to be shown what kind of sin [they are] committing and how terrible [their] conduct [was].'[69]

His explanation stemmed from both his political and pastoral theology. He addressed the clergy to 'diligently impress' his suggestions upon the laity in order to explain that this was tantamount to treason. It would invoke the wrath not only of the state but also God. It is not within humankind's 'own power and choice to go from one lord to another, as though they were free to do or not to do whatever they pleased', he wrote. All earthly authority, so long as it promoted peace and justice, was instituted by God and required humble submission unless one is 'compelled by force to abandon' it or, of course, is 'put to death because of it.'

There was another even more compelling reason to abandon such traitorous thoughts. 'Such faithless, disloyal, and perjurious people commit a still more horrible sin. They make themselves a party to all the abominations and wickedness of the Turks.' That is, by submitting to the Ottomans one was in fact surrendering and aligning oneself with the kingdom of Muḥammad. Crossing ranks strengthened and furthered the cause of the Turks against Christendom just like 'Judas not only made himself a party to the wickedness of the Jews against Christ, but strengthened and abetted it.' In addition to strengthening the resolve of the Turks by reinforcing their conviction that God was giving them victory by allowing them to overrun Christendom,[70] one

[68] *An den Christlichen Adel*, WA 6:459.24–25 (LW 44:203).

[69] *Vom kriege*, WA 30/2:137.21–23 (LW 46:193). The refrain 'Better the turban of the Turk than the tiara of the Pope' was used by peasants in the Balkans who, for so long, had been exploited by the Roman Catholic nobles. See Vitkus, 'Early Modern Orientalism', 212; Setton, 'Lutheranism', 161; Vaughan, *Europe*, 25–26.

[70] 'Look at the Turks, and you will see that they rely on the same trust in the flesh. For because they fight successfully against the Christians and have increased

would, as a Christian Turk, be engaged either directly or indirectly fighting against Christians and on behalf of the Devil.

The third reason for putting the temptation to regard Turkish rule as desirable out of mind was that once one became a subject of the Ottomans they would find out that the Turkish rulers were not as empathetic as one might be tempted to think. While they did permit everyone to practice their own religion, under certain Islamic restrictions, when it came to property and security of non-Turks they paid little regard and even enslaved non-Muslims. 'For it is characteristic of the Turk not to let those who are anything or have anything stay in the place where they live, but to put them far back in another land, where they are sold and must be servant.'[71] If, after these warnings, there were still some that failed to change their mind, Luther simply concluded, 'let them go to the Devil' for the empire would be better off without such wicked and depraved men.[72]

Realistically, given that the Turks were feared and despised by most, there probably were not many people in western Europe who expressed a desire to become subjects of the Turks. The possibility of the Ottomans breaking into the German Empire without a fight was thus not much of a concern. However, although his reading of Daniel 7 told him that the days of the Turks were numbered and he had for a time convinced himself that they would not be permitted to enter Germany,[73] as time pressed on he began to consider what would happen if his predictions were wrong and the Turks continued to expand westward. For example, in 1542, after they had annexed much of Hungary, he anticipated that the Turks were intent on the domination of Europe and were

---

their power through many great victories, especially in these latter times, they first take from us with the utmost smugness the title that we are the people of God, especially since we are being plagued by so many defeats. But they arrogate to themselves the glory that they are the people of God, because they are so successful from day to day, especially against the Christians' (*In Genesin Enarrationum*, WA 43:156.6–12 [LW 4:28]).

[71] As an example, Hertz notes that at the conquest of Belgrade 'the Serbian townsmen were deported to a village near Istanbul. In their stead, an Ottoman force occupied the citadel and Turks, Vlachs, Gypsies, and Jews were encouraged to settle in the town. Such population transfers were a common practice designed to cut the ties with the past and strengthen the sultan's control of the newly-won possession' ('Muslims', 149).

[72] *Vom kriege*, WA 30/2:137.21–140.23 (LW 46:194–196).

[73] See *Heerpredigt*, WA 30/2:166.13–17, 171.25–27; cf. WA TR 1:90.26–91.4 (LW 54:27–28).

therefore planning to invade Germany by passing through Poland.[74] If such an event happened, he had previously noted, the world would go Muslim.[75]

The very thought of Christians abandoning their faith for Islam caused Luther a great deal of concern. He had read in Georgius' *Tractatus de moribus, condictionibus et nequicia Turcorum* of innumerable Christians, including learned monks, renouncing their faith in Turkey and the Balkans, and was fearful that it would happen throughout Hungary. Following Hungary, if the Turks managed to penetrate Vienna he thought that Germany would follow suit. Even if Germany remained unscathed, though, German soldiers and those who lived in the border regions of the empire were at risk of being taken captive and sold into slavery in the Ottoman Empire. This was highly problematic for he had heard that 'Christians who are captured or otherwise enter into Turkey fall away and become altogether Turkish, for one very seldom remains [a Christian]' there.[76]

Following the siege on Vienna, Luther's fear that Christian captives would be induced into converting remained a central motif in his thoughts concerning the Turkish threat. For example, in *Heerpredigt* he noted how he heard and read that Christians in Muslim lands commit 'apostasy and willingly and without force believe the faith of the Turks or Muḥammad for the sake of the great external appearances that they have in their faith.'[77] He also remarked, 'There is danger that many of our people will become Turks,'[78] and explained that one of the primary reasons he thought Georgius's *Tractatus* should be published was 'in order to anticipate and prevent the scandal of the Muḥammadans. Since we now have the Turk and his religion at our very doorstep, our people must be warned lest … they deny their Christ and follow Muḥammad.'[79]

Luther thought that there were many reasons one might convert to Islam. In spite of some contemporaneous reports, for the most part he

---

[74] WA Br 9:622.30–36 (LW 50:228–229).

[75] *Widmungsbrief zu seiner Danielübersetzung*, WA DB 11/2:381.25–27.

[76] *Vom kriege*, WA 30/2:121.7–9 (LW 46:175); cf. WA 30/2:123.15–16 (LW 46:177–178).

[77] *Heepredigt*, WA 30/2:185.25–28: 'Ich denn höre und lese, das auch die Christen seer abfallen und des Türcken odder Mahomeths [*sic*] glauben williglich und ungezwungen an nemen umb des grossen scheins willen, den die haben ynn yhrem glauben.'

[78] *Vorwort*, WA 30/2:206.33–34 (H-B, 260).

[79] *Vorwort*, WA 30/2:207.25–27 (H-B, 260).

did not think that the Turks forced Christians to become Muslims.[80] Instead, he favoured other explanations. He believed that Christianity had for so long been led astray by papal innovations that Christians were duped into thinking external appearances (rites, piety, customs, etc.) were the marks of true religion. So when a Christian accustomed to the papal religion encountered Islam whether as a prisoner, slave, or free person they became mesmerised by the great display of religiosity. 'This is the reason why many persons so easily depart from faith in Christ for Muḥammadanism and adhere to it so tenaciously,' he suggested.[81] He also remarked that the underlying theology of Islam appealed to men and women since its doctrines, unlike the Christian teaching on the incarnation and Trinity, presented no offence to reason. Other explanations were also given. For example, on one occasion he expressed that on account of the manifest success of the Turks he 'believe[d] that in places which are close to the Turk many Christians lose courage because of this stumbling block and fall away from the faith, because they see that they are unlucky, but that the Turks are very prosperous.'[82] And yet another reason was that those from the 'wild crowd' were attracted to what he perceived as permissive sexual

[80] The 'Hungarian Luther' Pál Thúri Farkas, who was in Wittenberg and maintained contact with the University after his return to Hungary informed them that the Turks 'engaged in violent efforts to proselytise among the inhabitants of southern Hungary' (József Jankovics, 'The Image of the Turks in Hungarian Renaissance Literature', in Bodo Guthmüller and Wilhelm Kühlman [eds.], *Europa und die Türken in der Renaissance* [Tübingen: Max Niemeyer Verlag, 2000], 269; cf. Zhelyazkova, 'Islamization', 260–264). Luther, on the other hand, was fairly certain that the 'Turk lets everyone remain in his own belief' whereas 'the Pope does not also do this but forces the whole world … to his demonic lies' (see *Bulla coenae domini*, WA 8:709.2–8; also see *Vom kriege*, WA 30/2:120.25–121.17 [LW 46:174–175]). There is considerable debate and conflicting accounts concerning the 'tolerance' of the Turks. The scholarly consensus is, however, that the Turks were very tolerant of those who submitted to Ottoman rule. In fact, it has been argued that Protestantism was allowed to flourish under the Ottomans (see Béla Király, 'The Sublime Porte, Vienna, Transylvania and the Dissemination of Protestant Reformation in Royal Hungary', in B. Király [ed.], *Tolerance and Movements of Religious Dissent in Eastern Europe* [Boulder: East European Quarterly, 1975], 199–221). For a positive assessment of Turkish tolerance, in addition to Király, see Fischer-Galati, 'Reformation', 58–62; Thomas Arnold, *The Preaching of Islam: A History of the Propagation of the Muslim Faith* (Westminster: Archibald Constable and Co., 1896), 125–176, but for opposing views, see Unghvary, *Hungarian Protestant Reformation*, 114 *et passim*; Werner Elert, *Morphologie des Luthertums*, vol. 1 (Munich: C.H. Beck'sche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1931), 336, 344.

[81] *Vorwort*, WA 30/2:206.14–15 (H-B, 259).

[82] *In Genesin Enarrationum*, WA 43:156.32–34 (LW 4:29).

promiscuity.[83] Whatever the reasons, though, he was convinced that both the Pope and the Turks were part of the same demonic plot: to lead Christians from faith and to wreak havoc on the world.[84]

Luther's fears of Christian conversion to Islam were not unfounded. While there is debate concerning the nature of Islamisation in eastern Europe, it is clear that there were 'people who assumed Islam without having much of a choice in the matter.' One historian writes,

> This applied particularly to slaves, who might be prisoners of war, but also to the victims of soldiers who illegally, on the borders but sometimes even in the Empire's heartlands, kidnapped people for sale in the slave markets. In addition, there were boys drafted for service to the sultans, who also were expected to convert to Islam as a matter of course.[85]

Most of the Muslims living in the Balkans and Hungary, however, appear to have been there as a result of military occupation and Turkish migration into these areas after Christians were deported.[86] This, in any case, would have been hard to distinguish from Luther's standpoint, for seemingly out of nowhere, Muslim communities were taking root in Hungary.[87]

Ultimately, it was Luther's fear of Christian apostasy and conversion that caused him to address the ideology of Islam. Each of his writings that address the religious beliefs of the Turks served to provide his readers with enough information to demonstrate the deficiencies of Islam and also to bolster the foundations of their own faith. In five successive writings, each of which will be analysed specifically in chapters 5 through 8, he provided a host of critiques and arguments for Christians to be used in response to Islam.

In *Vom kriege* he evaluated Islam from the standpoint of its theology, political ideology, and marital ethics in order to convince his readers of the horrendous nature of the underlying ideology of the Ottomans. This would not only demonstrate the difference between Islam and Christianity, but he also hoped it would sharpen the resolve of Chris-

---

[83] *Verlegung*, WA 53:393.9–20.

[84] *Verlegung*, WA 53:394.9–17.

[85] Zhelyazkova, 'Islamization', 259.

[86] See Hertz, 'Muslims', 149; Tibor Halasi-Kun, 'Sixteenth-Century Turkish Settlements in Southern Hungary', *Belleten* 28 (1964), 1–72.

[87] See Géza Dávid and Pál Fodor, 'Hungarian Studies in Ottoman History', in Fikret Adanir and Suraiya Faroqhi (eds.), *The Ottomans and the Balkans: A Discussion of Historiography* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 2002), 342–346; Gábor Ágoston, 'Muslim Cultural Enclaves in Hungary Under Ottoman Rule', *AOH* 45 (1991), 181–204.

tians to pray and fight against any future attacks from the Turks. With the fundamental problems of Islam exposed, from Luther's perspective, he began only a short while later to address how a Christian should respond apologetically and polemically to Islam. His first attempt was made in the *Heerpredigt* wherein he offered pastoral advice for Germans who might find themselves as slaves and prisoners in the *Mahometisch reich*. This was meant to assure Christians of the veracity of their faith should they experience any temptation to abandon it and embrace the religion of the Ottomans. While *Heerpredigt* gives fairly basic advice, a decade later Luther translated Riccoldo da Monte di Croce's attack on the Qur'ān into German (entitled *Verlegung des Alcoran*) to contribute further to the apologetic task. As part of his growing conviction that Christians needed to be aware of the teachings of the Qur'ān and to be able to respond to attacks on their faith—either through a Turkish Muslim interlocutor or the temptations to convert from within—he envisioned the study of the Qur'ān by theologians and pastors with the intent of developing additional apologetic and polemical responses to the Turks. Reading the Qur'ān was, for Luther, a prerequisite for any legitimate attempt to take on Islam. He had even, several years earlier, mentioned that he would someday like to translate it into German.[88] Although he never got around to it, when he heard that its publication in Basel was jeopardised by an order of the city council he quickly wrote a letter endorsing its release. Writing on behalf of the faculty at Wittenberg, he persuaded the city officials to permit its release specifically for the task of polemics and apologetics, 'it is our opinion that pastors should have this reliable witness [that is, the Qur'ān] to preach to the people the abomination of Muḥammad.' He continued by noting that this would lead to several positive results. People would become more hostile against Muḥammad and Islam. Their Christian faith would be strengthened. And they would become 'lion hearts' in their witness to the pure gospel and more resolved in the struggle 'against the abominable lies of the Devil' propagated in the Qur'ān.[89] He also sent along a preface that he wrote to accompany its publication wherein he iden-

[88] *Vom kriege*, WA 30/2:121.31–122.2 (LW 46:176).

[89] WA Br 10:162.39–47: 'Darumb ist unser meinüng diese gewest, weil der Turcke herzu graset, das doch die pfarrher hetten ein gewis zeugnis dem volck fur zu predigen den grewel des Mahmets, damit sie yhm deste feinder wurden, auch ynn unserm Christlichen glauben gesterckt, deste freydiger und manhafftiger streiten, leib und gut wagen kundten, als die heraus unterweiset, gewis weren, wie gar wider grewliche lugen des teuffels und wie gar fur eine reine lere der Christen sie streiten und erbeiten

tified the most fundamental differences between the teachings of Islam and Christianity, which led him to the conclusion that Islam was a theological innovation. He explained and defended this further in a sermon that he delivered less than three weeks before his death. In short, he argued that the Christian religion was essentially the same religion that Adam and Eve practiced and was therefore the only truly revealed faith.

Luther's arguments were all meant to serve his Christian readers in their defence of Christianity either in their own mind or, perhaps, in an Islamic context. He also expressed the possibility of using such arguments to aid in missionary work amongst Turkish Muslims. There are more than a few references to this scattered about in his writings.[90] In the initial years of his reformatory work he reprimanded the papacy for jumping at the chance of war against the Turkish infidels rather than sending missionaries to them. In 1519, probably with the issuing of papal bulls such as *Pastor aeternus* and *Salvator noster* (at the Fifth Lateran Council) in mind, Luther again asked why the Pope, who was allegedly responsible for the pastoral care of all people, neglected to send missionaries to Turkey.[91] Three years later, responding to item six in the *Bulla de Coena Domini*, on the universal vicarage of the pope, he similarly remarked, 'If [the pope] had been Christ's vicar he would have stood on his feet and gone his way to preach the Gospel to the Turks and risk his limbs and life for that work.'[92] There are a few remarks which sug-

---

musten, welchs ich acht, solt einem Christen uber alle drummeln und posaunen ein recht lewen hertz ym felde machen.'

[90] This is a contentious issue amongst missiologists. Gustav Warnek posited that 'We miss in the Reformers not only missionary action but even the idea of missions' in *Outline of a History of Protestant Missions from the Reformation to the Present Time* (London: Oliphant Anderson and Ferrier), 9. On the basis of Warnek's influential work, according to Eugene Bunkowske, 'most modern scholars have badly represented Luther on missions' ('Luther, the Missionary' in Eugene Bunkowske and Michael Nichol [eds.], *God's Mission in Action* [Fort Wayne: The Great Commission Resource Library, 1986], 54). For a collection of Luther texts with missiological themes see Schultz and Theis (eds. & trans.), *LTM* (St. Louis: Concordia, 2003). On the nature Luther's missiology, see W. Elert, *The Structure of Lutheranism*, trans. Walter Hansen (Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1962), 385–402.

[91] *Resolutio Luteriana super propositione XIII de potestate papae*, WA 2:224.40–225.9. On the context and content of the bulls, see Kortepeter, 'Turkish Question', 167; Setton, 'Leo X', 389.

[92] *Bulla Cene domini*, WA 8:708.29–30: 'Wen ehr aber Christus stadthalter were, so wurde er auff seyne fusse tretten, hyngehen und den Turcken das Euangeli predigen, daran setzen leyb und leben.'

gest that he even looked forward to the possibility of preaching to the Turks himself.[93] If he was unable to, though, he hoped that his followers would someday have the opportunity. For example, he said to his table companions, 'I hope dearly to see the day when the gospel will come to the Turks, as is now a real possibility. It is not likely that I will see that day. But you might and then you will have to deal with the Turk carefully. … If one Turkish governor should receive the gospel, one would see how a hole would be torn among the Turk and his people. … It can easily happen that one of them might receive [the gospel].'[94]

During the late 1520s and into the 30s, as he began to inquire more about Islam, Luther was not all that optimistic about the prospects of missionary work or the possibility of Muslim conversions to Christianity. Probably from his reading of Riccoldo, who described Muslims as obstinate in their beliefs, he noted that converting Turks would indeed be a 'difficult art', but in spite of this he held out hope that just as he fell away from the papacy and the faith of Rome so too might some Muslim Turks abandon Islam and, like him, become 'blessed apostates' or 'refugees.'[95]

Luther also seemed to have envisioned missionary work amongst Muslims being carried out discreetly through Christian prisoners and slaves of the Ottomans.[96] This conception of missions follows Luther's basic principle that if a Christian was 'in a place where there are no Christians he needs no other call than to be a Christian, called and anointed by God from within. Here it is duty to preach and to teach the gospel to erring heathen or non-Christians, because of the duty of brotherly love, even though no man calls him to do so.'[97]

---

[93] *Predigt über Apostelgeschichte*, 17/1:509.24–26: 'Si autem essem inter Turcas, certe hospiti meo praedicarem et si conflueret populus, facerem itidem, quia Christianus inter hos eciam debet praedicare nomen Christi.'

[94] WA TR:5:221.1–21: 'Ich wolt gern erleben, das das euangelium unter den Turcken keme, wie denn wol geschehen kan. Ich aber were es schwerlich erleben; ir mocht es erleben, ir werdet aber auch genugsam mitt im zuschaffen haben … Wenn ein wasche das euangelium ergrieff, so wurde man wol sehen, wie es dem Turcken solt ein loch reissen unter sein volck … mag leicht, das auch einer dazu keme'.

[95] *Die kleine antwort auf H. Georgen nehestes buch*, WA 38:146.32–35: 'Die selben weren auch Apostaten, verlauffen und meineidig, Jst war, Aber selige Apostaten, selige verlauffene, Selige meineidige, die dem Teuffel nicht glauben gehalten und Apostaten für jm werden.'

[96] *Heerpredigt*, WA 30/2:192.22–195.4 (*LTM*, 72); *Vermahnung*, WA 51:621.22–622.32 (LW 43:239). Cf. pages 172, 214 below.

[97] *Das eyn Christliche versamlung odder gemeyne recht und macht habe*, WA 11:412.13–20 (LW 39:310).

Well aware of the prohibitions of proselytizing in Muslim lands the only way to perform what Luther construed as the chief duty of the Christian—the proclamation of the Gospel—was through actions and in private dialogue. However, for all that Luther could write concerning the evangelism of the Turks, unlike St. Francis of Assisi's legendary dialogue with the Egyptian Sultan al-Kāmil (d. 1238), he rejected or at least did not pursue an opportunity for an audience with Süleyman in 1530 when a former member of the Habsburg ambassadorial party informed him that the Turkish sultan made friendly inquiries about the German Professor.[98]

Luther's disdain for the ideology behind the crusades led him to address the Ottoman politico-military threat from a different perspective than what had generally been resolved in the past. Initially and certainly influenced by the ongoing Reformation controversies, rather than worrying about the still distant menace of the Turks, his focus was introspective. The real danger to Europe was the papacy and its stranglehold over Christians. Looking even further inward, Luther encouraged every German to throw off the burden of papal innovations and to begin repenting of their sin. Only then could Europe and, more importantly, Christianity be safeguarded from the tyranny of the papacy.

Because the Ottoman conquests were a direct punishment from God for theological indifference and lack of commitment to the recently restored teaching of the gospel, Luther was equally convinced that once Germany and even Europe turned their backs on the Roman Church God would withhold his rod of discipline embodied in the Turks. As the Turks made their way into Hungary, however, Luther also gave his hearty approval to a staunch military defence of the German Empire and its interests. Every person subject to the emperor and his officials was responsible to contribute to resisting the Ottomans, but he constantly reiterated that this must be done merely as a function of the civil government to the exclusion of any ecclesiastical leadership.

While Luther saw God's punishing hand at work behind the aggressive and violent military campaigns of the Turks from the beginning,

[98] See WA TR 2:508.20–21.3–8, 17–21; WA TR 1:449.13–18. On Süleyman's interests in European affairs and especially, as his name appears in an Ottoman document, مارتين لوترو (*Mārtīn Lūtrū*), see Christine İsom-Verhaaren, 'An Ottoman Report about Martin Luther and the Emperor: New Evidence of the Ottoman Interest in the Protestant Challenge to the Power of Charles V', *Turcica* 28 (1996), 299–317.

he began to perceive an even greater drama behind Ottoman domination of eastern Europe. As Heiko Oberman has demonstrated, his mental world was increasingly dominated by a sense of apocalypticism. Thus, as he sought to perceive the divine plan behind otherwise chaotic events he naturally turned to the pages of Scripture wherein he found prophecies (from Daniel, Ezekiel, and John's Apocalypse) that seemed to describe the tumultuous events of his day, particularly the rise of the Ottoman Empire. Although what the Scriptures described was dreadful, ultimately they offered hope for they foretold the collapse of Christendom's external foe—the Turks—as well as the internal enemy—the papacy.

Regardless of how much eschatological optimism Luther displayed he was also realistic. In addition to reports of Christians admiring and even desiring the so-called *Pax Ottomanica*, he had read and certainly heard of the people of the Balkans and even Hungary converting to Islam. So, as he witnessed the seemingly endless victories of Süleyman's army and continued to hear about the Islamisation of eastern Europe, he grew increasingly worried about Christian apostasy not only in the Balkans and Hungary but also, quite possibly, in Germany. Therefore, Luther placed a high priority on equipping pastors and laity with enough knowledge to ground them in their faith and enable them to be able to confront Islam through the use of apologetics, which could perhaps also be used to proselytise Muslims. It was with this motivation that Luther began to study and address the ideology of Islam.

CHAPTER FOUR

LUTHER'S KNOWLEDGE OF AND ATTITUDE TOWARDS ISLAM

The previous chapter described the context for Luther's interest in Islam. It demonstrated that, in addition to all the wartime propaganda and apocalyptic allusions, he was concerned on a very practical level with Christian perceptions of Islam. Moreover, he was eager to provide enough information to his readers so that they would be able to stand firm and defend the truthfulness of Christianity. To demonstrate the veracity of the Christian faith before a seemingly monolithic and imposing religion like Islam, however, requires knowledge of its ideology. While Luther was never personally exposed to Muslims or Muslim apologetic literature—and thus could not anticipate some of its overwhelming critiques of Christianity—he did attempt to obtain a solid grounding in its teachings before critiquing it. Thus, before analysing the particular arguments he put forward, Luther's knowledge of the Muslim world and his attitude towards Islam need to be addressed.

Luther's Source Material

Luther's knowledge of the Muslim world was derived primarily from medieval literature on Islam. While he did not list his sources in any one work, he made mention of them throughout his writings. For example, in 1530 he noted how he had not been able to acquire a copy of the Qurʾān yet so his study of Islam had been limited to two medieval polemics. 'Although I have eagerly desired for some time to learn about the religion and customs of the Muḥammadans, nothing has been available to me except a certain *Refutation of the Alcoran* [*Confutatio Alcorani*] and the *Critique of the Alcoran* [*Cribratio Alkorani*] by Nicholas of Cusa. I have tried in vain to read the Qurʾān itself.'[1] This statement appears in his preface to Georgius de Hungaria's *Tractatus*

[1] *Vorwort*, WA 30/2:205.2–8 (H-B, 258).

de moribus, condictionibus et nequicia Turcorum, which also included a host of information on the Muslim Turks, and in the Wittenberg and Nürnberg editions of 1530 was entitled *Libellus de ritu et moribus Turcorum*.[2] For the next decade he tried to obtain a copy of the Qur'ān, but it was not until 1542, on Shrove Tuesday, that he received a copy of it in Latin translation.[3]

These four resources constitute the main body of Luther's source material.[4] There are, however, several places where he mentioned having at least an acquaintance with other works. For example, in a letter from 1542 he noted how he had seen several excerpts of the Qur'ān contained in polemical material published in 'Köln and elsewhere.'[5] The work from Köln to which he referred is undoubtedly the 1533 edition of Dionysius the Carthusian's large *Contra Alchoranum & sectam Machometicam*.[6] The identity of the other work (or works) published 'elsewhere' is less certain. In light of the literature available, however, this could simply be a reference to Riccoldo's *Confutatio*, Nicholas' *Cribratio*, or, perhaps, the recently published paraphrased translation of Dionysius' *Contra Alchoranum*, entitled *Alchoran. Das ist des Mahometischen Gesatzbüchs und Türckischen Aberglaubens ynnhalt und ablänung* (1540).[7] It could also refer to the Spanish Franciscan Alfonso de Espina's *For-*

[2] There are a few erroneous remarks about this work in relation to Luther in the secondary literature. Following a lead from the Weimarer Ausgabe (WA 30/2:198), Gordon Rupp attributed its authorship to Vincentius Ferrar (see 'Luther against "the Turk"', 259–260), and, on a different note, Gregory Miller dates Luther's preface to it as 1543 not 1530 ('Luther and the Turks', 80).

[3] *Verlegung*, WA 53:272.16: 'Aber itzt diese Fastnacht hab ich den Alcoran gesehen Latinisch.' Shrove Tuesday in 1542 was 21 February.

[4] Most scholars have maintained that these were his only sources. See Henry Preserved Smith, 'Luther and Islam', *AJSLL* 39:3 (1923), 218, 219; Hermann Barge, 'Luthers Stellung zum Islam und Seine Übersetzung der Confutatio des Ricoldus', *AM* 43:2/3 (1916), 113–114; G. Simon, 'Luther's Attitude toward Islam', *MW* 21 (1931), 258–259; C. Umhau Wolf, 'Luther and Mohammedanism', *MW* 31 (1941), 177; Grislis, 'Luther and the Turks', 180, 188n1; Walter Beltz, 'Luthers Verständnis von Islam und Koran', *WZGSR* 32:5 (1983), 88; Rajashekar, 'Luther and Islam', 182; Hagemann, *Luther und der Islam*, 29–31; Dean Apel, 'Luther's Approach to Islam: Ingemar Oberg's Search for Mission Praxis in the Weimar Edition of Luther's Works', *CT&M* 26:6 (1999), 441; Choi, 'Martin Luther's Response', 33.

[5] WA Br 10:162.65–163.67: 'Das auch bereit an zu Collen und anderswo der Alcoran das mehrer teil mit statlichen confutation sind ausgangen.'

[6] Cf. Bobzin, *Der Koran*, 70–76.

[7] See Bobzin, *Der Koran*, 72n221, 75. The translator of this work is still unknown, but the cataloguer for the British Library suggests that it was the catholic humanist Heinrich von Eppendorff (1496–1551).

talitium fidei in universos Christianae religionis inimicos, which he referred to elsewhere in his discussions on the Qur'ān.[8]

Luther was also acquainted with contemporary reports of Turkish culture. Although the exact identity and contents of these are not known for certain, except for Georgius' *Tractatus*, how widely he read in order to obtain information can be gleaned from a comment in one of his three appeals for prayers to be raised against the Turks wherein he noted how he had read numerous *neue zeitung* and other literary descriptions of the Turks.[9] These could refer to any number of works, but he must have at least read the Italian Bishop Paolo Giovio's *Commentario delle cose de' Turchi* after it was translated and published in both Latin (1537) and German (1538) from a press in Wittenberg.[10]

A few other miscellaneous sources also need to be mentioned in order to give as complete of a picture as possible of Luther's reading or at least acquaintance with works on Islam. First, a recorded conversation at the table of the Luther household indicates that he read Guillame Postel's *De orbis terrae concordia* (1544), which contained a lengthy summary of Qur'ānic teachings. Judging by Luther's response to questions from his students regarding its worth, however, it is clear that he did not value it too highly.[11] Another work from the previous year (1543) and the most important source on Islam in the sixteenth century, Theodor Bibliander's massive anthology of Islamic texts in Latin translation, anti-Qur'ānic polemics, and historiographical accounts of the Turks, was probably at least viewed by Luther. After all, he was responsible for ensuring its publication and also contributed two prefaces to the volume.[12] The Wittenberg library register contains several other important sources for information on Islam ranging from a few of

---

[8] See *Enarratio capitis noni Esaiae*, WA 40/3:670.12–13. According to the editors of the Weimarer Ausgabe, he first read Alfonso de Espina's work in 1518 (see 670n3 and 669n1).

[9] *Eine Vermahnung an alle Pfarrherrn*, WA 50:485.4–5: 'Es haben uns bis daher so mancherley neue zeitung und geschrey von der Tuercken anzug endlich jrre gemacht.' Cf. Miller, 'Luther and the Turks', 79–80.

[10] WA 30/2:200, 204; cf. Rupp, 'Luther against "the Turk"', 260.

[11] WA TR 5:472.20–25: 'D.M. Luther ward ein gross Buch bracht, welches ein Franzos, Wilhelmus Postellus genannt, von Einigkeit in der Welt geschrieben hatte, in welchem er sich heftig bemühete, die Artikel des Glaubens aus der Vernunft und Natur zu beweisen, auf daß er die Türken und Jüden möchte bekehren, und alle Menschen … zu einem Glauben bringen.'

[12] Both Luther's preface to the Qur'ān and to the *Tractatus* were included in one edition of the *Machumetis* of 1543. See Bobzin, 'Zur Anzahl', 213–219; *Der Koran*, 209–221.

Raymond Llull's works to Bernard von Breydenbach's popular volume describing his pilgrimage to Jerusalem.[13] However, there is no direct evidence that he consulted these as source material.

An interesting aspect of Luther's reading with regard to Islam, which has not been pursued by scholars, is his knowledge of Latin translations of Arabic works.[14] In addition to Averroes (Ibn Rushd, 1120–1198), who he mentioned quite a few times throughout his biblical commentaries and other places, he seems to have been acquainted with other 'Arab' authors as well. In his addendum to the *Verlegung des Alcoran* he mentioned Avicenna (Ibn Sīnā, 980–1037), the physicians Ibn Māsawayh (d. 857), a Nestorian Christian, and ʿAlī ibn al-ʿAbbās (fl. 949–982), and the astronomers Abū Maʿshar Jaʿfar ibn Muḥammad (787–886) and al-Farghānī (fl. 860) as 'Saracens' who 'did not believe the Qurʾān but were led by reason.'[15] While Luther's comment on their alleged disregard for the Qurʾān may be unwarranted, on the basis of this passage it is tempting to include Luther in the long list of western admirers of Arab and Persian philosophy and science.[16] However, without further analysis into his acquaintance with their works this seems to be premature.

Regardless, Luther's main sources undoubtedly consisted of Riccoldo's *Confutatio*, Nicholas' *Cribratio*, Georgius' *Tractatus*, and a Latin translation of the Qurʾān. His attitude towards these sources is particularly interesting and will elucidate his approach towards studying the religion and culture of the Turkish Muslims.

Luther's most important polemical source was the slightly corrupt version of Riccoldo da Monte di Croce's *Contra legem Sarracenorum*. The manuscript that he used, as the title *Confutatio Alcorani seu legis Saracenorum, ex graeco nuper in latinum traducta* indicates, was twice removed from its original autograph. Demetrios Kydones (c. 1324–1397), a notable

---

[13] See Sachiko Kusukawa, *A Wittenberg University Library Catalogue of 1536* (Cambridge: LP Publications, 1995), 17, 37, 39, 84.

[14] They have been mentioned in passing, however, by Simon, 'Luther's Attitude', 261.

[15] *Verlegung des Alcoran*, WA 53:389.33–390.2: 'Denn auch unser Medici und Astronomi viel der Sarracenen bücher haben, als Avicennam, Mesue, Hali, Albumasar, Alfraganus etc., die freilich Menschen gewest und dem Alcoran nichts gegleubt, sondern der vernunfft gefolget haben.' For specific works by these and other authors contained in the University of Wittenberg library, see Kusukawa, *Wittenberg Library*, 109, 114, 122–124, 130, 132, 134–136, 142–145.

[16] See Edward Grant, *God and Reason in the Middle Ages* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 70.

Byzantine scholar, translated it into Greek during the mid-fourteenth century, and an Italian named Bartholomy Picenus de Montearduo, after an unsuccessful attempt to find the original, rendered it back into Latin (c. 1506). Editions of this translation were printed in Rome (1506) and Paris (1509, 1511, and 1514), but it was a manuscript copy, which is now located at the Sächsische Landesbibliothek in Dresden, that Luther read and annotated.[17] His second earliest source was, as indicated above, the *Cribratio* of Nicholas of Cusa. Unlike the *Confutatio*, however, it cannot be ascertained how much he studied it for he does not mention it, at least specifically, anywhere else in his writings. Presumably, he read it through at least once, but, as Hartmut Bobzin argues, it was probably only on a superficial level.[18]

What is interesting with regard to Luther's attitude towards these sources is that he originally criticised them as straw-man arguments. In 1530 he wrote, before gaining access to the Qur'ān,

> The authors of the *Confutatio* and the *Cribratio* seem to have intended through pious examination to frighten sincere Christians away from Muḥammad and hold them secure in their faith in Christ. Still, while they eagerly take pains to excerpt from the Qur'ān all the most base and absurd things that arouse hatred and can move people to ill-will, at the same time they either pass over without rebuttal or cover over the good things it contains.[19]

Over a decade later, only a few days after Luther read a complete text of the Qur'ān, he reversed this judgement (on the *Confutatio*).

> I have often read the book of Brother Richard entitled *Confutatio Alcoran*, but I could not believe that there are, on this earth, reasonable men, whom the Devil has talked into believing such shameful things. … In any case [my reading of the Qur'ān] demonstrates that this brother Richard did not make up the material in his book, but it correctly compares with [it]. And there can be no suspicion of fabrication here. … This I therefore say: that I must believe this brother Richard, who so long ago refuted the Qur'ān.[20]

---

[17] On this manuscript, see WA 53:265; Mérigoux, 'L'ouvrage', 38; and Antoine Dondaine, 'Ricoldiana: Notes sur les oeuvres de Ricoldo da Montecroce', *AFP* 37 (1967), 135. The Latin text, along with Luther's marginalia and editorial marks (for his German translation), is printed on odd-numbered pages in WA 53:273–387. The card catalogue from the Wittenberg library indicates that the manuscript was brought from Strassburg (Kusukawa, *Wittenberg Library*, 165).

[18] Bobzin, *Der Koran*, 34.

[19] *Vorwort*, WA 30/2:205.8–15 (H-B, 258).

[20] *Verlegung*, WA 53:272.16–19, 26–27: 'Das Buch Burder Richards, prediger Ordens,

Upon reversing his opinion and because there was no better work (*weil man kein bessers hat*) Luther rendered the *Confutatio* into his own German in 1542.[21]

After reading both of the works for the first time Luther gained access to the *Tractatus*. In contrast to these he initially thought that Georgius was a more reliable source on the religion and culture of the Muslim Turks. 'Whoever this man was', he wrote,

> The author of this book seems to present his case with the highest degree of credibility. Accordingly, he has achieved a high level of authority with me, so that I trust him to be narrating the truth with as much sincerity as power. Although the things he details are moderate and few, and I would wish for more and greater things, nevertheless, even such moderate and small matters are presented credibly. He relates details so as not only to recount the evils of the Turks but also to exhibit alongside them the best things, and he presents them in such a way that through comparison with those people he might reprove and censure our own. Nevertheless, he does not approve of such things, however piously they are done, but refutes them with as much vigour and strength as had been done up to that time. His writing certainly bears the clear signs of a forthright and sincere heart that writes nothing from hatred, but sets forth everything out of love of the truth.[22]

Although 'indulgence must be granted to this author', he continued, 'he is truly to be praised for the noble zeal, candour, and diligence by which, to the extent he was able, he distinguished himself faithfully.'[23] On account of this Luther decided to edit and publish it in 1530.[24]

Confutatio Alcoran genant, hab ich vormals mehr gelesen, Aber nicht gleuben können, das vernünfftige Menschen auff erden weren, die der Teufel solte bereden, solch schendlich ding zugleuben … Aber itzt diese Fastnacht hab ich den Alcoran gesehen Latinisch …. So viel aber daraus gemarckt, das dieser Bruder Richard sein Buch nicht ertichtet, Sondern gleich mit stimmet. Und das kein falscher wohn hie sein kan … Das rede ich darumb, das ich diesem bruder Richard gleuben must, der so lange zuvor den Alcoran verlegt.' Already in the Kydone's Greek translation, Riccoldo's name was rendered 'Ρικάρδος' (Mérigoux, 'L'ouvrage', 52) hence Luther's designation, following his Latin manuscript, 'bruder Richard.'

[21] *Verlegung*, WA 53:272.31. Evidence suggests that Luther read this work at least three times. He mentioned having consulted it, as already indicated, in the 1530 preface to the *Tractatus*. In a marginal note regarding when Muḥammad lived he noted that the year he made the remark was 1540 (WA 53:276). And he had to read it at least one more time when he began his translation of it in 1542. On Luther's dependence upon Riccoldo, also see E.I.M. Boyd, 'Ricoldus: A Dominican Missionary to Moslems in the Thirteenth Century', *MW* 8 (1918), 47.

[22] *Vorwort*, WA 30/2:205.16–25 (H-B, 258–259).

[23] *Vorwort*, WA 30/2:208.11–14 (H-B, 262).

[24] See WA Br 215.14–15. This work is still heralded as the most important source

As mentioned above it took Luther over a decade to acquire a copy of the Qur'ān in spite of the fact that there were, by 1542, four complete Latin translations of it available.[25] Unfortunately, the manuscript that Luther read has been lost, so ascertaining which of the four available translations he was acquainted with is a bit difficult.[26] The only comment that Luther made with regard to the nature of the manuscript was that it was a 'very poor translation' (*seer ubel verdolmetscht*) and that he wished to see a 'clearer' (*klerern*) one. Now, Luther did not know Arabic, although it has been suggested,[27] consequently his comment that he read a 'poor translation', especially when he wrote that he wanted to see a 'clearer' and not 'better' version, should be taken as a reference to the state of the manuscript and the style of the Latin.[28] This only brings us slightly closer to identifying what translation Luther actually read, but based on its turgid Latin and wide dissemination in comparison to the others we must assume that it was the first western translation of the Qur'ān completed by Robert of Ketton in the mid-twelfth century.[29]

In spite of the fact that Luther found the translation 'poor' or, rather, difficult, there are some features to Robert's Qur'ān that make it a more accessible read in comparison to the others. Thomas Burman has recently argued compellingly that this translation of the Qur'ān, although it was a paraphrase, was not necessarily corrupt. Not without its blunders, it was 'able to impart to [its] reader the Muslim interpretations of ambiguous or unclear passages', and is 'disinterestedly faithful at many points to both the literal meaning and the received interpretation of the Islamic Scriptures.' So, although it is certainly a 'free-wheeling paraphrase', it 'nevertheless reflected what Muslims themselves thought to be the meaning of the Qur'ān.'[30] Thus, by extension, when Luther read it he was reading a fairly reliable representation of the text (as far as translated texts of the Qur'ān go).

---

for information pertaining to fifteenth-century Ottoman culture (see Klockow, ed., *Tractatus*, 3; Palmer, 'Fr. Georgius', 54).

[25] Bobzin, 'Latin Translations', 201; Burman, 'Polemic', 187–188.

[26] Bobzin, 'Latin Translations', 195.

[27] Harfiyah Haleem et al. (eds.), *The Crescent and the Cross: Muslim and Christian Approaches to War and Peace* (London: Macmillan Press, 1998), 4.

[28] Bobzin notes, 'Da Luther kein Arabisch verstand, kann sich diese Bermerkung nur auf den Stil der Übersetzung beziehen, und dieser ist schon sehr früh—und auch später noch—immer wieder kritisiert worden' (*Der Koran*, 38).

[29] Bobzin, *Der Koran*, 38. On Robert's Qur'ān being the 'standard version' for European readers up until the eighteenth century, see pages 11–12.

[30] Burman, '*Tafsīr*', 707, 731.

Luther on the Study of Islam and the Qur'ān

With Luther's reliance upon the aforementioned texts, which were composed in the context of debate where for the most part the 'Muslim interlocutor was absent',[31] along with his theological convictions, it should come as no surprise that he was extremely hostile towards Islam. Nonetheless, in spite of his enduring and impetuous description of the Turks as the Devil incarnate (*der leibhafftige Teuffel*) or one among many of the Devil's minions (*diaboli agminibus*), he also criticised the transmission of false images of the Islamic Turks. He could, in one paragraph, describe the life and nature of the Turks as depraved and yet, in the following sentence, protest against any deliberate misrepresentations of them.[32]

The concern for truthfully depicting the life of the Turks carried over into Luther's study of their religion. Although he was convinced that the mission of Islam was to bring about the total destruction of Christianity, he advocated and strove to represent Islamic teachings as accurately and completely as he could. This also meant that elements of Muslim piety, which were on the surface noble and praiseworthy, should be brought to light. For example, in *Vom kriege widder die Türcken*, he mentioned that he had heard of admirable qualities amongst the Turks such as that they 'are faithful, friendly, and careful to tell the truth.' Not only did he believe this, but, he added, 'I think that they probably have more fine virtues in them than that.'[33] A year later, in his preface to the *Tractatus*, he repeatedly praised the outward appearances of Islam, and noted that compared to the state of European Christendom 'the religion of the Turks or Muḥammad is far more splendid in ceremonies and, I might almost say, in customs than ours, even including that of the religious or all the clerics …. Our religious are mere shadows when compared to them, and our people clearly profane when compared to theirs. Not even true Christians, not Christ himself, not the apostles or prophets ever exhibited so great a display.'[34] At about the same time that he wrote these things, noting the appar-

[31] Lewis, *Islam*, 13.

[32] *Vom kriege*, WA 30/2:121.18–26 (LW 46:175–176). Cf. *Verlegung*, WA 53:392.35–37. 'Bleibt manches von dem, was Luther im Hinblick auf den Islam tat und schrieb, gleichwohl von Bedeutung. Wichtig ist hier vor allem Luthers Bemühen um authentische Kenntnisse über die islamische Lehre' (Bobzin, 'Gedanken Martin Luthers', 275).

[33] *Vom kriege*, WA 30/2:127.19–21 (LW 46:182).

[34] *Vorwort*, WA 30/2:206.3–5, 11–15 (H-B, 259).

ent consistency of Islam, he wrote the following striking, and certainly hyperbolic words, 'The abominable Muḥammad almost became my prophet'![35]

Luther believed that irrespective of whether it could be perceived as positive or not everything needed to be revealed about Ottoman Islamic culture. The whole truth needed to be told for only then could an accurate and legitimate evaluation take place. 'Indeed, those who only censure and condemn the base and absurd characteristics of the enemy but remain silent about matters that are honest and worthy of praise do more harm than good to their cause. What is easier than to condemn things that are manifestly base and dishonest (which in fact refute themselves)?' Rather, if one could show that even the apparent 'good things' in the Muslim religion were based on a faulty foundation then, and only then, could one begin to do real damage to the credibility of Islam. 'But to refute good and honest things that are hidden from sight, that is to further the cause, that is to lift up and remove the scandal, to despoil the messengers of their counterfeit image of the light and to render them appropriately hateful because of their base plundering of the light.'[36]

Luther's concern that the Turks and their religion be thoroughly represented was expressed throughout the course of his writings. Already in *Vom kriege*, wherein he addressed the Ottoman religion specifically for the first time, he stated how he was 'disgusted … that neither our great lords nor our scholars have taken any pains to give us any certain knowledge about the [religious or political] life of the Turks.'[37] Then, noting how he had some parts of the Qur'ān and would someday like to translate it into German,[38] he explained that he would base his summary and criticism only on what he knew to be true, that is, he was sure of it because it was derived 'from the Qur'ān of the Turks' (meaning citations from the Qur'ān found in, for example, Riccoldo's *Confutatio*). Anything else that he heard, he stated, he would not bring up because he could not 'be sure about it.'[39] Echoing this early sentiment over the

[35] *Der Cxvij. Psalm*, WA 31/1:256.6–7: 'Auch were mir bey hanent der schendliche Mahometh zum Propheten' (LW 14:38).

[36] *Vorwort*, WA 30/2:205.25–28, 29–206.2 (H-B, 259).

[37] *Vom kriege*, WA 30/2:121.19–23 (LW 46:175–176).

[38] This has led to an erroneous note in the American Edition of *Luther's Works*, which states that he did eventually translate it into German (LW 43:235n24).

[39] *Vom kriege*, WA 30/2:127.3–5 (LW 46:182).

lack of Islamic and Ottoman studies in his own day, he was equally surprised at how little had also been done in the past. He wrote,

> It amazes me … that long ago no one rendered the Qurʾān into the Latin language, even though Muḥammad has ruled and caused great harm more than nine hundred years ago. Yet no one has taken it upon themselves to investigate what Muḥammad's faith was. They were merely satisfied knowing that Muḥammad was an enemy of the Christian faith. But the where and how from point to point has not become publicised, which nevertheless is necessary to know.[40]

Luther placed a high priority on reading and studying the Qurʾān as a means to properly understand Islam. This can be seen most clearly in his involvement with its publication in 1543.[41] When he had received word that the Council of Basel was in a deadlock over whether or not it could be published, he sent a letter arguing on behalf of its production. He wrote, 'Therefore, because the Turks are coming near, this is still our opinion: that pastors have reliable evidence for preaching the abomination of Muḥammad to the people. … In order to honour Christ, to do good for Christians, to harm the Turks, to vex the Devil, set this book free and do not withhold it.'[42] He then appealed to the apologetic legacy of the church fathers. 'And if the holy fathers had not freely received the books of heretics how would they have encountered its secret poison … and warned and protected the church?'[43] As it turned out, Kenneth Hagenback has demonstrated, the support from a host of humanists in Strassburg notwithstanding, Luther's letter was the primary cause behind the council's overturn of the ban.[44] And shortly afterwards Luther sent his preface for inclusion in the project in which he reiterated his concern for basing judgements on legitimate information. 'But what can we say about matters that are still outside

[40] *Verlegung*, WA 53:272.9–15: 'Und wunderte mich … das man den Alcoran nicht lengst hette in die Latinische sprache bracht, So doch der Mahmet nu lenger denn neun hundert jar regirt und so grossen schaden gethan hat, doch niemand sich drümb angenomen, zuerfaren, was Mahmet ein Feind Christlichs Glaubens were, Aber wo und wie von stück zu stück, ist nicht laut worden, Welchs doch von nöten ist zu wissen.'

[41] See pages 59, 91.

[42] WA Br 10:162.39–41: 'Darumb ist unser meinüng diese gewest, weil der Turcke herzu graset, das doch die pfarrher hetten ein gewis zeugnis dem volck fur zu predigen den grewel des Mahmets. … Christo zu ehren, den Christen zu gut, den Turcken zu schaden, dem teuffel zu verdries, bis buch lassen frey gehen und nicht hindern.'

[43] WA Br 10:163.75–78: 'Und wenn die heiligen veter der ketzer bucher nicht hetten offentlich zu lesen bekomen, wie wolten sie yhrer heymlichen gisst … begegnet haben und die kirchen da fur gewarnet und geschutzt haben?'

[44] Hagenbach, 'Rathe zu Basel', 291–326.

our knowledge?' One must read the Qur'ān for 'it is of value for the learned to read the writings of the enemy.'[45]

Luther's interest in the reading and study of the Qur'ān was obviously not motivated by disinterested inquiry. It served pedagogical purposes with an apologetic and polemical goal. This is especially clear, again, in his letter to Basel. First, he argued, if people were truly informed about the religion of the Turks, particularly by reading the Qur'ān, this would militate against apostasy rather than cause it. 'I am of the mind that one causes nothing more annoying nor can render more damage (more than with any weapons) than if one brings their Qur'ān to the light of day.' Once its contents were made public he was convinced that everyone would be able to see 'what a cursed, shameful, and dreadful book it is, full of lies, fables, and every abomination.' The Turks themselves 'conceal and gloss over' it. 'As evidence', he continued, 'they are unwilling to see the Qur'ān translated into different languages. Because they probably feel that it would bring a great apostasy in all sensible hearts among them.'[46]

An acquaintance with the Qur'ān would not only ensure and protect Christians from being enticed by the Turks; also, Luther naïvely suggested, if the Turks themselves really knew what it said, or at least those who were reasonable, they too would see its errors. Only a thorough acquaintance with the Qur'ān could aid in the reinforcement of the truth of the Christian faith against error. This, he wrote, was why he supported its publication. 'We have desired to use your publisher to help against such apostles of the Devil and teachings of the shameful Muḥammad … that the blasphemous seduction might arm and protect the least of us against such poisonous teaching and not only us Christians but also that some Turks might themselves be converted.'[47]

---

[45] *Vorrede*, WA 53:572.13–14 (H-B, 263).

[46] WA Br 10:162.32–39: 'Mich hat das bewogen, das man dem Mahmet oder Turcken nichts verdrieslichers thun, noch mehr schaden zu fugen kan (mehr denn mit allen wassen), denn das man yhren alcoran bey den Christen an den tag bringe, darinnen sie sehen mugen, wie gar ein verflucht, schendlich, verzweivelt buch es sey, voller lugen, fabeln und aller grewel, welche die Turcken bergen und schmucken und zu warzeichen ungern sehen, das man den alcoran ynn andere sprache verdolmetscht. Denn sie fulen wol, das yhnen grossen abfal bringet bey allen vernunfftigen hertzen.'

[47] WA Br 10:162.54–59: 'Wir haben aber ewr drucker wollen hierin zu helffen brauchen wider solchen teuffels apostol und lere des schendlichen Mahmets, ob Gott wolt zu letzt gnade geben, das die lesterliche verfurung mocht gemindert und nicht allein wir Christen wider solche gisstige lere gewapent und verwaret, sondern auch ettliche Turcken selbs bekeret werden mochten.'

Luther's Knowledge of Islam

There is little scholarly consensus concerning the nature and extent of Luther's knowledge and comprehension of Islam. In the first attempt to outline the Reformer's familiarity with Muslim religious beliefs, C. Umhau Wolf gave the following assessment: 'A fair amount of knowledge can be gleaned by the student reading the works of Luther. In most of his material, Luther's knowledge was unusually accurate. … The most impressive characteristic about Luther's knowledge of the Turks and of their religion is the almost total absence of important gaps.'[48] Other scholars have posited the opposite. For example, Stephen Fischer-Galati wrote, 'Luther's views on the Turks and Islam … were simplistic.'[49] Ludwig Hagemann even notes that he 'did not concern himself with Islam as a religious factor.' His critique of Islam resulted not from his evaluation of Muslim doctrine but rather from his identification of the Turks as an 'eschatological anti-Christian power.'[50] Oddly enough, no one has outlined in detail or undertaken a thorough analysis of the breadth and depth of Luther's understanding of the Muslim world. This gap in scholarship will be filled in so that a proper assessment of his knowledge and attitude towards Islam might be reached. Before moving into a survey of Luther's knowledge of Islam, however, a brief note on the methodology employed here is necessary.

There are a few locations in Luther's vast literary corpus that offer short, partial summaries of Islamic teachings and practices, but in each case they do not constitute everything he knew about the Turk's religion. In other words, Luther never wrote a treatise devoted to outlining everything he had learned about the faith of Muslims. Rather, there are several descriptions of various aspects relating to Islam in his writings on the Turks and, of course, the *Tischreden*. In addition to this, there are also relatively lengthy anecdotes contained in works that would otherwise seem to have nothing to do with the Turks or their religion such as his lectures and sermons on the Bible. Moreover, he also studied one of the most influential medieval polemical works against Islam several times (Riccoldo's *Confutatio*), edited the *Tractatus* for publication, and also read the Qur'ān, presumably, attentively. So, paying heed to Wolf's reasonable assumption that Luther did not write down every-

[48] Wolf, 'Luther and Mohammedanism', 165.
[49] Fischer-Galati, 'Reformation and Islam', 55.
[50] Hagemann, *Luther und der Islam*, 16.

thing that he knew about Islam,[51] in addition to investigating Luther's actual writings, his two primary sources (besides the Qur'ān) have been examined in order to gain insight into the breadth of his knowledge on Islam. Furthermore, Luther could barely say anything about Islam without making some sort of scathing remark. Thus, in sifting through the various relevant sources it has been necessary, on several occasions, to deduce the information on Islam he had obtained to which his criticism referred.

To begin with, Luther used several terms in reference to Islam and Muslims. Although one of his most preferred sources noted that Saracens called their religion al-Islam (*Elesalem*),[52] he favoured terms such as 'Turkish faith', 'religion of Muḥammad', 'Muḥammad's sect', or 'Muḥammadanism.' When he did translate Riccoldo's transliteration of al-Islam he mistakenly rendered it *Elesam*,[53] and when he referred to Turkish Muslims he simply called them Turks, although he was aware that not all Turks were Muslims. Alluding to Muslims in general, he used either the term 'Saracen' or 'Muḥammadan' even though he knew, from Riccoldo, that they called themselves 'not Saracens but Muslims' (*nicht Sarraceni, Sondern Maselamin*).[54]

The extent of Luther's knowledge of Islamic history is not completely discernible. In several places, while mentioning an historical anecdote regarding Muḥammad, Saracens, or Turks, he referred to having read of it in 'the histories', although not once does he identify his source(s).[55] Regarding the Turks, however, he at least drew upon two histories published in Wittenberg: Giovio's *Commentario* and Georgius' *Tractatus*. And from these he occasionally referred to the activities of various Ottoman sultans.[56] Nevertheless, drawing from the scattered allusions to Islamic history, a skeleton of his relatively broad knowledge of the rise of Islam can be constructed. The first chapter of the *Tractatus* placed the origins of the 'law of Muḥammad' and 'sect of the Saracens' during the pontificate of Pope Boniface V (619–625) and the reign of

---

[51] Wolf, 'Luther and Mohammedanism', 165.

[52] *CA*, WA 53:341.10: 'Ipsi autem Saraceni vocant eam denominatiue Elesalem.' Originally, Riccoldo used the term 'din ellessalem' or *dīn al-Islām* (*ClS*, 10.12).

[53] *Verlegung*, WA 53:342.2.

[54] *Verlegung*, WA 53:310.10–11; This is a verbatim transcription from *CA*, WA 53:307.33 (cf. *ClS*, 7.47).

[55] For example, *Der Achte Psalm Davids*, WA 40/2:227.8–12 (LW 12:115); *Von den Juden und ihren Lügen*, WA 53:485.7–9 (LW 47:220).

[56] For example, see his brief comments on Mehmet and Selim in *Verlegung*, WA 53:272.24–26; *In Genesin Enarrationum*, WA 44:656.23–25 (LW 8:106).

the Byzantine Emperor Heraclius (610–641).[57] It was during this time, 'already 900 years ago', Luther noted in the margin of the *Verlegung*,[58] that Muḥammad appeared, following the notorious heretics of earlier Chrisitan centuries such as Marcion, Ebion, Novatus, Manes, Arius, and Pelagius.[59] Translating Riccoldo, Luther wrote,

> Heraclius defeated the Persian King Khosrau [II] and brought the holy cross back to Jerusalem with great triumph 620 years after Christ's birth. And in Heraclius' fifteenth year Muḥammad, an Arab, appeared who had become rich through a widow that he had married. Thereafter he became a leading figure among highway robbers and came to aspire with such hope to become the king in Arabia. However, because he was viewed as one of unimportant origins, they did not accept him. Then he passed himself off as a prophet. And after he had contracted epilepsy or, fell to an epidemic, and continually fell down … he said that an angel had spoken to him. And he said that several words which he heard (as he said) were like a bell that rang in his ears.[60]

From this point on, he explained, Muḥammad attracted an increasing number of followers.

Although this passage and several paragraphs on the history of Muḥammad's early followers up until the codification of the Qur'ān under caliph 'Uthmān clearly served to indict Muḥammad and prove his revelations fraudulent, they do indicate, hitherto unreported by modern scholars, that Luther had some insight into the early years of Islam.[61] The subsequent history of the Muslim world after the death of Muḥammad and the first three rightly-guided caliphs, on the other hand, were only known piecemeal to Luther. The *Tractatus* mentioned the so-called Arab conquests of the Holy Land and North Africa and

---

[57] *Tractatus*, 156.

[58] *Verlegung*, WA 53:276.

[59] *Auslegung des ersten und zweiten Kapitels Johannis*, WA 46:593.38–594.1 (LW 22:67).

[60] *Verlegung*, WA 53:354.5–16: 'Heraclius der Persen könig Cosroe geschlagen und das heilige Creutz gen Jerusalem bracht hatte, mit grossem Triumph, anno sechs hundert und zwentzig nach Christi geburt, Und anno funffzehen Heraclij etc, Da brach herfur Mahmet ein Araber, der nu reich worden war, durch eine Widwen, die er gefreiet hatte, Darnach ward er ein Heubtman unter den strassen reubern und kam in solche hoffart, das er König in Arabia zu werden gedacht. Aber weil er eins geringen herkomens und ansehens war, namen sie jn nicht an. Da gab er sich fur einen Propheten aus, Und nach dem er das Falubel, oder die fallende seuche hatte, und stets darnider siel … sprach er, Ein Engel hette mit jm geredt. Und sagt darnach etliche Sprüche, welche er hette gehort (wie er sagt) wie eine Glocke, die umb seine ohren geklungen hette.'

[61] See especially *Verlegung*, WA 53:354.17–360.2.

early invasions of Sicily and Rome (846).[62] And the *Verlegung* noted the divisions in the Muslim world between those who 'follow Muḥammad', the orthodox Sunnīs, and those who 'follow ʿAlī', the Shīʿi and alluded briefly to sub-sects such as the Assassins of Lebanon and the sevener Ismāʿīlīs.[63] Details of Sufi dervish groups found amongst the Turks, such as the *Mevlevi* or whirling dervishes, whose practices described in this fifteenth-century document can still be witnessed today, are found aplenty in the *Tractatus*.[64]

While his knowledge of general Arab Muslim history was slight, Luther read several important accounts of Ottoman history. The most complete reports were contained in the Latin and German translations of Giovio's *Commentario*. This early chronicle recorded the primary activities of the Turks under the sultans all the way back to *gazi* Osman himself. In Luther's works, he referred to Ottoman history in passing several times, especially in relation to the Fall of Constantinople to Sultan Mehmet and the conquest of the Mamlūks under Sultan Süleyman's father Selim.[65] In summary, he saw the history of Islam—the Saracens and then the Turks after them—as nothing short of phenomenal for its progressive and steady growth.[66]

Also, along with their history, Luther had a fairly good knowledge of Ottoman culture. On the surface he admired the Turks for their discipline and modesty. He noted he had heard that they were friendly and honest.[67] And on account of their devotion to the law brought by Muḥammad they led 'very pious' and 'abstemious' lives.[68] The virtues of Muslim culture were, however, only admired insofar as they served to extol discipline amongst unruly, licentious Germans and, moreover, when they provided a convenient apologetic weapon for his doctrine of justification against what he perceived as Rome's legalism.[69]

The elements of Turkish culture that Luther discussed in particular were quite broad. With reference to Muslim women, he mentioned that it was 'customary among the Turks for women to veil both the head

---

[62] *Tractatus*, 156; *Vom Mißbrauch der Messen*, WA 8:561.36–562.10 (LW 36:228).
[63] *Verlegung*, WA 53:360.7–10, 346.1–15.
[64] *Tractatus*, 274–284, 356; cf. Palmer, 'Fr. Georgius', 57.
[65] *Von den Konziliis und Kirchen*, WA 50:579.1–3 (LW 41:91); *Verlegung*, WA 53:272.21–26.
[66] *An Kurfürsten zu Sachsen*, WA 54:404.10–12 (LW 43:278).
[67] *Vom kriege*, WA 30/2:127.19–21 (LW 46:182).
[68] *Reihenpredigten über Johannes*, WA 46:58.18–22, 60.34 (LW 22:330, 333).
[69] See, for example, *Vorwort*, WA 30/2:207.3–4.

and the whole body.'[70] The prohibition of alcohol, or at least wine, was also mentioned repeatedly by the German who was himself quite fond of drinking in moderation. In a passage from the *Verlegung*, he noted that Muḥammad forbade the consumption of wine because it could potentially lead to drunkenness. He continued noting that wine is *ein gute Creatur Gottes*, but stated that its misuse should rightly be condemned. So, altering the *Confutatio*'s concluding accusation that the Arabs of Muḥammad's day were all intemperate lightweights, Luther simply noted that 'perhaps' Muḥammad had to condemn it because they could not hold their alcohol.[71]

Several other aspects of Turkish Muslim culture were discussed by Luther such as circumcision, domestic practices, the respect children had for elders, education, etc., but none received as much attention as marriage. The issue of marriage in the Qurʾān and amongst the Turks, as Luther perceived it, will take up a significant portion in chapter 5 so the discussion here will be limited. In general, however, Luther was under the impression that Muslim men were permitted to take as many wives as they pleased and were allowed to divorce them just as freely. Although he noted that there were those who chose not to take advantage of this, 'this is the law', he wrote, 'and anyone who wants to can follow it.'[72] In a brief passage he explained the Qurʾān's marriage and divorce laws.

> A Saracen is apparently allowed to put away his wife and take her back as often as he wishes. Yet, strangely, after a wife has been sent away for the third time, she may not be retrieved. When former husbands want their wives back, they offer money to the person who received the discarded woman. He lets it be publicly known that he wishes a divorce. When this happens, she can return to her former husband. It sometimes happens that the woman is so pleasing to the second man that he makes the statement that he will not separate from her. Thus the original couple lose money, marriage, and hope. Such regulations ought not be applied to dumb animals, let alone people.[73]

---

[70] *In Genesin Enarrationum*, WA 44:320.37–321.1 (LW 7:26).

[71] *Verlegung*, WA 53:325.30–34. For the base text see *CA*, WA 53:327.18–23.

[72] *Vom kriege*, WA 30/2:126.26–28 (LW 46:181).

[73] *Verlegung*, WA 53:320.26–322.6: 'Ein Sarracen mag sein Weib verstoffen und wider an nemen, so offt es jm geliebet, doch so fern, das er die, zum dritten mal verstoffen, nicht mus wider an nemen. Es were denn, das sie der ander Man nicht recht oder volkomen beschlaffen hette. Darumb wenn sie jre Weiber gern wider hetten, so geben sie geld dem, der die verstossen zu sich genomen hat (der zu weilen ein Blinder oder sonst geringe person ist), das er sole öffentlich sich lassen hören, Er wölle sich von

Human beings, regardless of national or religious identity, he wrote elsewhere, had 'no right to make marriage a free thing as though it were in our power to do with as we pleased, changing and exchanging.'[74]

Apart from the perceived marital practises of the Turks, Luther did not seem too interested in other cultural aspects of Islam. Instead, he was much more enthused about learning and especially critiquing the doctrine of the Turks. He expressed this at a table conversation. 'Personal anecdotes which they narrate about Muḥammad do not move me for we must attack the doctrine of the Turks.'[75] In fact, he was most concerned about doctrine with all his opponents. His intense preoccupation with it was succinctly stated in his lectures on Galatians where he wrote, just as 'in philosophy a tiny error in the beginning is very great at the end, in theology a tiny error overthrows the whole teaching.'[76] Diverging from the popular medieval approach of discrediting the prophet in order to discard his teaching, Luther thought that if he could show the teachings of Islam to be erroneous wavering Christians would automatically reject the 'law of Muḥammad' and, though improbable, some Turks might be moved to embrace the Christian Gospel. Due to his polemical, apologetic, and missiological focus, the elements of Muslim religious beliefs that he acquired were primarily the contentious elements between Christianity and Islam.

The *point de départ* and bedrock of Luther's theology as well as his religious epistemology was the incarnation of God in Christ. In his own

---

jr scheiden. Wenn das geschehen ist, so kan sie der erste wider zu sich nemen. Es geschicht aber auch wol, das der selb ander man der frawen so wol gefelt, das er darnach spricht, Er könne sich nicht von jr scheiden. So hat denn jener beide, geld, Braut und hoffnung verloren. Aber solch Gesetze solt man nich Menschen, sondern unvernünfftigen thieren stellen.'

[74] *Das fünffte, Sechste und Siebend Capitel S. Matthei*, WA 32:378.7–9 (LW 21:94–95).

[75] WA TR 5:221.4–5: 'Personalia, quae dicunt de Mahomet, me non movent, aber die lehre der Turcken mussen wir angreiffen.' This was Luther's chief concern with all his theological opponents. In fact, he considered it his calling. For example, he told his colleagues and students, 'Doctrine and life must be distinguished. … This is my calling. Others have censured only life, but to treat doctrine is to strike at the most sensitive point …. When the Word remains pure, then the life (even if there is something lacking in it) can be molded properly. Everything depends on the Word' (WA TR 1:294.19–295.3, [LW 54:110]).

[76] *Commentarius in Epistolam ad Galatas*, WA 40/2:46.17–19 (LW 27:37). Continuing, he added, 'Doctrine belongs to God, not to us; and we are called only as its ministers. Therefore we cannot give up or change even one dot of it (Matt. 5:18) …. For doctrine is like a mathematical point. Therefore it cannot be divided; that is, it cannot stand either subtraction or addition' (46.19–27).

words, *In Christo crucifixo est vera Theologia et cognitio Dei*.[77] It should not surprise one, then, to see that he was fixated on the Qurʾānic teachings about Jesus, for, as he wrote in *Heerpredigt*, christological doctrines are what distinguished Christianity from 'all other faiths on earth.'[78] His first summary of 'Islamic christology' was located in *Vom kriege* where he noted that the Turks regarded Christ as a sinless and holy prophet whose prophetic mission was limited 'to his own time', just like any other prophet. His sonship and co-equality with God the Father and the Holy Spirit in the one divine *ousia*, he continued, was rejected and consequently Muslims did not believe him to be 'the Saviour of the world who died for our sins.' On account of this, even though Muslims praised Jesus (*ʿĪsā*) as a messenger of God, according to Luther, Muḥammad shows himself to be 'a destroyer of our Lord Christ and his kingdom.' Without the divine personage and redemptive work of Christ, he concluded that 'all Christian doctrine and life are gone' for 'it leaves almost nothing of Christian truth remaining.'[79]

The Qurʾānic rejection of the deity of Christ, although 'extraordinarily pleasing to reason', Luther suggested, was the product of a *mélange* of beliefs from heretics, Jews, and heathens.[80] These various alleged heretic-sources, particularly in reference to the nature of Christ, were repeated frequently in Luther's writings. For example, the claim that Christ never asserted that he was God, Muḥammad obtained from the Arians. That Christ will be revealed again at the end of the world to kill the anti-Christ was thought to be from the Jews.[81] And that Christ was not crucified but rather 'another, who was similar to him' (*einen*

[77] *Disputatio Heidelbergae habita*, WA 1:362.18–19. Thus, Otto Zöckler's thesis on the basis of Luther's apologetics, 'Die beste materielle Basis für alle Apologie des Christentums ist in diesem Satze zum Ausdruck gebracht: Jesus Christus allein befriedigt das Heilsbedürfnis und zugleich auch das Wahrheitsbedürfnis des Menschen' (*Geschichte der Apologie des Christentums* [Gütersloh: C. Bertelsmann, 1907], 309–310).

[78] *Heerpredigt*, WA 30/2:186.15–16.

[79] A year later he summarised what Islam expressly rejected of basic orthodox Christianity. 'Mahometh enim negat Christum esse filium Dei, Negat ipsum mortuum pro nostris peccatis, Negat ipsum resurrexisse ad vitam nostram, negat Fide in illum remitti peccata et nos iustificari, Negat ipsum iudicem venturum super vivos et mortuos, licet resurrectionem mortuorum et diem iudicij credat, Negat Spiritum sanctum, Negat eius dona' (*Vorwort*, WA 30/2:207.40–208.2).

[80] *Vom kriege*, WA 30/2:122.26–28 (LW 46:176–177, 181).

[81] This is from Q 43:61 and two *ḥadīths*. See Al-Bukhārī, *Saḥiḥ al-Bukhārī*, trans. Muḥammad Khan (Chicago: Kazi Publications, 1979), 3:233–234 (no. 425), 4:436–437 (no. 657).

andern, der jm ehnlich gewest)[82] was killed instead was derived partly from the Manicheans and, in the margin Luther noted, Muḥammad himself.[83]

In addition to these, Luther grew more familiar with several aspects of Islamic christology over time, especially after he read the Qurʾān. For example, he commented repeatedly on Qurʾān 6:101: 'How can [God] have a son when He has no female companion.'[84] When he first encountered this passage he sarcastically remarked, 'O klugheit!'[85] Later on in the *Verlegung*, removing a significantly less abrasive comment of Riccoldo, Luther wrote,

> He thoughtlessly lies about God against the Gospel … that it is not possible for God to have a son because he does not have a woman. And he continually repeats this as if it is a solid, excellent reason. However, such wisdom is just like when I say: 'God cannot be living for He does not eat or drink, does not crap or piss, does not have a runny nose or cough.' Christians know full well how God can have a son and it is not necessary that Muḥammad teach us how God must first become a man and have a woman to produce a son or a bull must have a cow to produce a calf. Oh how over-powered in the flesh of women Muḥammad is. In all his thoughts, words, deeds, he cannot speak nor do anything apart from this lust. It must always be flesh, flesh, flesh.[86]

---

[82] *Verlegung*, WA 53:280.27. Cf. Q 4:157.

[83] See *Verlegung*, WA 53:280. 'Mahometus hanc victimam et placationem ridet', he wrote in his preface to the Qurʾān (*Vorrede*, WA 53:572.3–4).

[84] Translation modified.

[85] *Verlegung*, WA 53:280.

[86] *Verlegung*, WA 53:334.24–35: 'Von Gott leuget er sicher daher wider das Euangelium … Das ummüglich sey Gott, einen Son zu haben, denn er hat kein Weib, Und solchs zeucht er jmer an, als sey es ein fester köstlicher grund. Aber solche klugheit ist eben, als wenn ich spreche: 'Gott kan nicht leben, denn er isst und trincket nicht, kacket und pisset nicht, rotzet und hustet nicht.' Die Christen wissen wol, wie Gott einen Son haben kan, und ist nicht not, das Mahmet uns lere, wie Gott müste zuvor ein Man sein, der ein Weib hette, einen Son zu zeugen, oder ein Farre, der eine Kue hette, ein Kalb zu zeugen, Wie ist der Mahmet in dem Frawen fleisch ersoffen, in allen seinen gedancken, worten, werken, kan fur solcher brunst nichts reden noch thun, es mus alles fleisch, fleisch, fleisch sein.' The charge that Muḥammad was infatuated with sex was based on a *ḥadīth* (Al-Bukhārī, *Saḥiḥ al-Bukhari*, 1:165 [no. 268]), which Riccoldo reproduced in the *CA* (WA 53:313.20–22; cf. *Verlegung*, WA 53:316.20–24). Luther added in the margin, initialising it 'M.L.' as if to somehow say that he really believed it, 'Weib ist Mahmets Got, Hertz und ewiges Leben.' He reiterated this charge, insulting the prophet further, in *Von den letzten worten Davids*, WA 54:91.32–92.5 (LW 15:342–343). 'Neither did Muḥammad find it in his Bible, that is, in his bed of harlotry', he wrote, 'for that is where he did most of his studying. Thus this contemptible, filthy fellow boasts that God, that is, the Devil, had endowed him with so much physical strength that he could be with as many as 40 women and yet remain unsatisfied. Indeed, his

Although not in terminology, Luther knew that the denial of Christ's divinity was based on the admonition to avoid *shirk* or associating partners to God.[87] He of course considered this charge to be erroneous. The Qur'ān 'lies about Christians', he wrote, when it says 'that they give a partner to God. That is an open lie, for Christians in the entire world say that God is one and is indivisible. Certainly nothing is more united than the Godhead or Divine Essence.'[88] Yet, in spite of all these attacks on traditional Christian christology, Luther often admitted that, among the many things that the Qur'ān had to say about Christ, insofar as his humanity was concerned, it spoke of him highly.[89]

Although Luther never admitted and probably never did completely see the underlying rationale of Islamic theology, particularly *vis-à-vis* Christianity, he knew the basic framework of Islamic thought. Whereas the point of departure of Luther's theology was the person and work of Christ (alongside the Scriptures), for Muslims, arguably, it is the uncreated, eternal speech of God recorded in the Qur'ān.[90] Early on he knew its centrality in both religious doctrine and jurisprudence for already in 1520 he noted that the Turks did not distinguish between spiritual and temporal laws but rather saw the two as a unified whole, which were guided, ordered, and ruled by 'their Qur'ān.'[91]

Before delving deeper into Luther's understanding of the Qur'ān's message, it is necessary to discuss his views on the messenger for the two are closely linked. Muḥammad is not conceived of as just a prophet (*nabī*) in Islamic thought; he is also regarded as a messenger (*rasūl*) who, like Moses (*Mūsā*) and Jesus (*ʿĪsā*), received a revelation (recorded in Scripture) from God. The difference with Muḥammad was that he brought the revelational lineage of all *nabiyyūn* and *rusul* to a close.[92] The

---

choice book, the Qur'ān, smells and savours of his studies in that Bible, the carnality of harlots. He looked for and found the spirit of his prophecy in the right spot, that is, in the mons Veneris.'

[87] For example, see Q 9:31.

[88] *Verlegung*, WA 53:328.3–6: 'Von den Christen leuget er, das sie Gotte einen gesellen geben, Das ist eine offenberliche Lügen, Denn die Christen in der gantzen welt sagen, das Gott einig und unzerteilet sey, ja das nichts einigers ist, denn die Gottheit oder Göttlich wesen.'

[89] See, for example, *Verlegung*, WA 53:374.22–23.

[90] See Q 85:22. Also see W. Montgomery Watt, *Bell's Introduction to the Qur'ān* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1970), 170–172.

[91] *An den Christlichen Adel deutscher Nation*, WA 6:459.26 (LW 44:203).

[92] Q 33:40.

message that he brought (embodied in the Qur'ān) was the pinnacle of God's revelation and distinguisher (*al-Furqān*) of all correct doctrine of both past and present. This Islamic conception of the history of God's special revelation to man through messengers and Scripture was best described to Luther in Georgius' *Tractatus*.

> The general opinion of nearly all Turks concerning their law is as follows: They say the first great prophet, to whom for the first time the law was given by God, was *Mūsā*, that is Moses, the book *Tawrāt* was given to him, which we call the pentateuch; And every human, who adhered at that time to this law, was saved. When, however, in the course of time human vice and carelessness broke this law, after this transgression the second great prophet *Dāwud* was chosen, who we call David, to whom the book *Zabūr* was given, which we call the Psalms. This was first kept like the previous and then, after it was broken, the third great prophet *'Īsā* followed, that is Jesus, to whom the third law was sent in the book of the *Inǰīl*, which we call the gospel and which was at its time for all the cause of salvation. It finally, like the preceding ones, was abandoned, and the fourth elected [messenger] was Muḥammad, who received from God the book with the law, which is called the Qur'ān.[93]

Riccoldo also explained the abrogation of the 'law' brought by Jesus. In a chapter where it seems he artificially placed words into the mouths of Muslims, he wrote,

> Saracens try to reply [to Christian interrogation] saying, 'We do not say that the Gospel is not from God, since the Qur'ān clearly bears witness to this. Neither do we say that it is imperfect, since it is from God. But the Gospel involves such difficult and excellent things that we cannot do them. For who can love God with his whole heart and love his neighbour as himself? Who can pray for his persecutors and accusers? … [T]he Gospel commands certain other excellent things. Therefore, since it was not a law that was capable of being kept, God made provision for the world through a law of salvation. He made lighter commands and gave

[93] *Tractatus*, 256.14–259.26: 'Communis opinio omnium fere Turcorum talis est de lege eorum: Dicunt enim primum prophetam magnum, cui data fuit lex primitus a deo, fuisse Missa, id est Moyses, cui datus est liber 'tefrit', quem nos 'penthateucum' uocamus; et omnem hominem, qui eo tempore ipsam legem obseruasset, saluatum esse. Cum autem per successum temporis humana malicia et negligentia hanc legem corrupisset, in huius preuaricationis remedium electus est secundus propheta magnus Daut, quem nos Dauid dicimus, cui datus est liber 'czabur', quem nos 'psalterium' uocamus. Quo prioris modo seruato et corrupto tercius quoque propheta magnus subiunctus est Yesse, id est, Ihesus, cui tercia lex cum libro 'inglis', quem nos 'euangelium' dicimus, missa est; que suis temporibus omnibus causa salutis fuit. Ea tandem precedentium modo euacuata quartus electus est Mechometus, qui legem cum libro, qui 'alcoranus' dictus est.'

> the world the Qur'ān, which does not contain these difficult things at all, but exists to save men through itself in an easy way.'[94]

Luther apparently considered Georgius' explanation to be more representative of Islamic teaching for he repeats it several times throughout his writings. His first mention of it is in *Vom kriege* where he explained how the Qur'ān described Jesus' prophetic ministry as being limited 'to his own time' and brought to completion 'before his death, just like any other prophet.' The prophethood of Muḥammad was, on the other hand, regarded as universal, he wrote. 'Since Christ's office of prophet is now complete he [Muḥammad] has been commanded to bring the world to his faith.'[95]

Luther was fully aware that Muḥammad is regarded by Muslims to be 'the universal prophet of the entire world' (*der gemein Prophet aller welt*) who was also 'the end, sign, and seal (or completion) of all the prophets' (*das Ende, Sigel und Schweigen [oder auffhören] aller Propheten*).[96] He was also cognizant that the Qur'ān and Muslim apologists claimed that the coming of Muḥammad had been foretold in the previous books sent down by God. Rendering Qur'ān 61:6 into his German, he wrote, 'Christ prophesied much in the Gospel concerning him [Muḥammad] to the children of Israel. There he said, "I announce to you an apostle of God who will come after me, who will be named Muḥammad".'[97] In response, he initially mustered a simple 'O Teuffel' in a marginal comment, and, as will be seen below, offered a significant rebuttal in a later chapter of the *Verlegung*.

The issue of Christ's restricted or limited prophetic vocation and the universality of Muḥammad's is discussed extensively in other works. For example, in his sermons on the Gospel of John he explained the abro-

---

[94] *CA*, WA 53:385.7–16: 'aD [*sic*] haec autem conantur respondere quidam superstitiosi et contentiosi saraceni dicentes: Non dicimus, quod euangelium non sit a deo, cum Alcoranum hoc manifeste testetur. Neque dicimus imperfectum esse, cum a deo sit: sed tam ardua et perfecta continet euangelium, ut non sufficiat mundus ea perficere. Quis enim deum ex toto corde et proximum sicut seipsum potest diligere? Quis potest pro persequentibus et calumniantibus orare? … Et alia quaedam perfectissima mandat euangelium. Quoniam igitur non erat lex, quae potuisset seruari, prouidit mundo deus per legem salutis et leuia fecit mandata et dedit mundo Alcoranum, quod minime continet difficilia haec, sed facile est ad saluandum homines per ipsum.'

[95] *Vom kriege*, WA 30/2:122.8–9 (LW 46:176–177).

[96] *Verlegung*, WA 53:302.13 (cf. 286.24), 326.18–19.

[97] *Verlegung*, WA 53:284.7–9 (cf. 286.30–31): 'Christus hab im Euangelio viel von jm geweissagt den Kindern Israel, da er spricht: "Ich verkündige euch einen Apostel Gottes, der nach mir komen wird, der heisst Mahmet."'

gation of Christ's 'law' by Muḥammad in contrast with the former's abrogation of the Law of Moses. 'Just as we Christians say that Moses and Abraham were circumcised but believe that circumcision is a thing of the past today, so the Turk declares that Christ's word and mission no longer have validity.'[98] In another passage where he acknowledged that 'Muḥammad … speaks of Christ in a laudatory way' further insight is gained into his understanding of Muḥammad's role in the history of God's revelation. 'It is a very wicked error when the monks and sophists portray Christ as a new lawgiver after Moses', he began and then added,

> Not unlike the error of the Turks, who proclaim that their Muḥammad is the new lawgiver after Christ. Those who portray Christ this way do Him a supreme injury. He did not come to abrogate the old Law with the purpose of establishing a new one; but, as Paul says here, He was sent into the world by the Father to redeem those who were being held captive under the Law. These words portray Christ truly and accurately. They do not ascribe to Him the work of establishing a new Law; they ascribe to Him the work of redeeming those who were under the Law.[99]

Luther clearly understood how Islam posits that Jesus, like prophets before him, brought a law or *sharīʿa* to the community over which they guided as a prophet. What he did not mention and probably never really grasped was that Islam does not posit an abrogation of the religion of Moses or Jesus.[100] Rather, the Qur'ān's own image is that the religion Muḥammad proclaimed was both equivalent to the religion of Adam and all the prophets afterward. To the claim that Christianity (and Judaism) is older and therefore superior it asserts that they were at one time legitimate and *ipso facto*, in a sense, Islamic, but the Jews and Christians created innovative teachings and were led astray. Muḥammad and the Qur'ān thus restored the monotheistic orthodoxy (*ḥanīfiyya*) of primitive Judaism and Christianity while bringing a new improved *sharīʿa* not just for the Arabs but the entire world. Whether Luther grasped this completely is doubtful.

---

[98] *Reihenpredigten über Johannes*, WA 47:186.38–41 (LW 22:476).

[99] *Commentarius in Epistolam ad Galatas*, WA 40/1:82.20–21, 562.13–20 (LW 26:32, 367–368).

[100] On the distinction between the perpetual religion (*al-dīn*) of Islam from Adam forward and the abrogation of previous law (*sharīʿa*), see Sayyid Maududi, *Towards Understanding Islam*, 22nd edn., trans. Khurshid Ahmad (Lahore: Idara Tarjuman-Ul-Quran, 1995), 142–143; Kenneth Cragg, *Jesus and the Muslim: An Exploration* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1985), 17–74.

Luther did, however, manage to acquire a fairly broad understanding of the particular teachings of Islam. By the sixteenth century, allegations that Muslims worshipped a multiplicity of gods were rare. Luther could on a few occasions accuse the Turks of worshipping the Devil or holding Muḥammad as a deity.[101] However, such exaggerations were rhetorical devices or large, involved theological inferences. He was completely aware of Islam's monotheism, and in several places he referred to the Turks' belief in one God. 'Turks … feign great religious zeal and boast against us Christians of their belief in the one God, the Creator of heaven and earth.'[102] In another place he wrote that a Muslim 'names and has in mind the true God who created heaven and earth.'[103] He even informed his readers that the Muslims call God *Alla*.[104] 'In the Arabic language Allah means God', he wrote and speculated that, etymologically, it was 'a corruption from the Hebrew *Eloha*.'[105]

One enduring and controversial passage concerning Luther's understanding of the Muslim God is contained in the *Großer Katechismus*.[106] In the explanation of the third article of the Apostles' Creed, he wrote, 'All who are outside the Christian church, whether heathen, Turks, Jews, or false Christians and hypocrites, even though they believe in and worship only one, true God [*ob sie gleich nur einen wahrhaftigen Gott glauben und anbetten*] nevertheless do not know what his attitude is toward them. They cannot be confident of his love and blessing.'[107] Although this pas-

---

[101] For example, 'The Turk swears by the Devil or Mohammed, whom he regards and worships as his god, the way we worship our Lord Christ and swear by Him' (*Das fünffte, Sechste und Siebend Capitel S. Matthei*, WA 32:384.38–385.2 [LW 21:102]).

[102] *Von den letzten worten Davids*, WA 54:68.8–13 (LW 15:314).

[103] *Vorrede auf die Propheten*, WA DB 11/1:3.15 (LW 35:271).

[104] *Vom kriege*, WA 30/2:128.128.10–11 (LW 46:183).

[105] *Vom kriege*, WA 30/2:128.8–11 (LW 46:183). Luther suggested Hebrew origins for several other Arabic terms as well. For example, in his exegesis of Genesis 42:6, where Joseph became governor over all of Egypt subject only to the Pharoah, he noted a consonantal parallel between the Hebrew root for governor (שלט) and the term 'sultan' (*In Genesin Enarrationum*, WA 44:464.29–38 [LW 7:223]; cf. *Von den Juden und ihren Lügen*, WA 53:452.8–16 [LW 47:180]). For his conjecture on the invention of the term Turk by the Jews, see WA TR 2:533.25–26.

[106] At least five articles have been written on the subject: E. Christian Kopff, 'Who Believes in and Worships the One True God in Luther's Large Catechism', *Logia* 13 (2003), 55–57; Charles Arand and James Voelz, 'Large Catechism, III, 66', *CJ* 29:3 (2003), 232–234; Thomas Manteufel, 'What Luther Meant', *CJ* 29:4 (2003), 366–369; and, most recently, Edward Engelbrecht, *One True God: Understanding Large Catechism II 66* (St. Louis: CPH, 2007).

[107] *Der Großer Katechismus*, BELK, 661.66.5–18: 'Denn was außer der Christenheit ist,

sage seems clear[108]—that Muslims believe in one God but that even this misses the mark by solely relying on the hidden God instead of the revealed God in Christ—it has been obfuscated by problematic translations. For example, two of the most recent English translations render the clause *ob sie gleich nur einen wahrhaftigen Gott glauben und anbetten* as 'even though they believe in and worship only *the* one true God.'[109] However, the original German does not contain the definite article. Furthermore, the grammar and the context do not demand it.[110] So this passage should be translated as it has been above.

Islam's monotheism is, of course, built upon the fundamental doctrine of the unicity of God or *tawḥīd*. Luther was acquainted with this teaching especially in connection to the Qur'ānic denial of the Trinity.

> For if you were to ask such a very saintly Jew, Turk, or heretic whether he believes that this one God, Creator of heaven and earth (whose name they exalt so piously and whom they call Father—although all this falsely), really is a Father and has a son in the Godhead outside of creation, he would be horrified in his great holiness and would regard this as frightful blasphemy. And if you would ask further whether the same, one God, Creator, Father (as they call Him with their lying mouths) is also a son, who has a Father in the Godhead, he would stuff up his ears in his great zeal, gnash his teeth, and worry that the earth might swallow you and him. And if you continue to ask whether the same, one God, Creator, and Father (as they boastfully call Him) is also a Holy Spirit, who has the Father and the Son, from whom He derives His divine essence, this super holy man would run away from you as though you were the vilest Devil just come from hell.[111]

Rejection of the Trinity was, according to Luther, tantamount to idolatry. Therefore, he alleged that Muslims 'invent a god such as they wish to have, not as God has revealed Himself.'[112] Moreover, the allegation

---

es seien Heiden, Türken, Jüden, oder falsche Christen und Heuchler, ob sie gleich nur einen wahrhaftigen Gott gläuben und anbeten, so wissen sie doch nicht, was er gegen ihn gesinnet ist, können sich auch keiner Liebe noch Guts zu ihm versehen.'

[108] Especially in light of his conclusion: 'Therefore they remain in eternal wrath and damnation, for they do not have the Lord Christ, and, besides, they are not illuminated and blessed by the gifts of the Holy Spirit.'

[109] Theodore Tappert (ed.), *The Book of Concord* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1959), 419; Robert Kolb and Timothy Wengert (eds.), *The Book of Concord* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 2000), 440. Emphasis added.

[110] *A fortiori*, Vincent Obsopoeus, a humanist scholar, immediately translated Luther's German into Latin rendering the disputed clause: 'quamquam unum tantum et verum Deum esse credant et invocent' (*Der Großer Katechismus*, BELK, 661.66.5–20).

[111] *Von den letzten worten Davids*, WA 54:68.7–20 (LW 15:315).

[112] *Enarratio Psalmi II*, WA 40/2:301.13–19 (LW 12:84).

of *shirk*, prompted by the doctrine of *tawḥīd*, was a false allegation when directed at Christians. 'Although the Qur'ān says: "You should not take three Gods for there is one God" this does not counter us and proves nothing. For we say ourselves, yes even the heathen, that there is only one God, in addition, he is also singular and indivisible, nothing could be more singular.'[113]

While he recognised that one of the fundamental concerns of Islamic thought was maintaining *tawḥīd*, Luther, perhaps unsurprisingly, showed no sympathy towards it. This is especially clear in his ruminations over the first clause of the *shahāda* or Muslim profession of faith. He sarcastically remarked, in his first mention of it, 'For they have been taught in the Qur'ān that they shall boast constantly with these words, "There is no God but God." All that is really a device of the Devil. For what does it mean to say, "There is no God but God," without distinguishing one God from another?'[114] Even Georgius de Hungaria's explanation that the entire *lex Turcorum*–that is, Islam—was grounded (*fundata*) upon this confession did not cause any further investigation into its deep theo-logic.[115] Rather, he continued to disparage it especially in the *Verlegung*. Muslims say that it is necessary that 'one should repeat these words everywhere: "There is no God but God and Muḥammad is God's apostle", and God is great.' But, he asked,

> What is this particularly great thing, as if here we are informed of a dubious or odd new teaching? Who does not know that God is God and that he is great? Who has ever heard that God is not God or that he is impotent? … It sounds like as if one was saying: 'There is no ass but an ass', 'there is no cow but a cow', 'there is no man but a man.' Everyone certainly knows that an ox or a dog is not an ass, also that man or angels are not God. Fools and senseless people like to speak like this.[116]

---

[113] *Verlegung*, WA 53:286.5–8: 'Und ob wol der Alkoran sagt: "Jr solt nicht drey Götter nennen, Ursach: Es ist ein Gott", das ist nicht wider uns und beweiset nichts. Denn wir sagen selbs, ja die Heiden auch, das allein ein Gott sey, dazu also einig und unzerteilich, das nichts einigers sein könne.'

[114] *Vom kriege*, WA 30/2:128.13–15 (LW 46:183).

[115] *Tractatus*, 254.27–28, 29–30.

[116] *Verlegung*, WA 53:318.11–20: 'Man sprechen solle allenthalben diese wort: 'Es ist kein Gott, denn Gott, Und Mahmet ist Gottes Apostel', Und das Gott gros ist. Was ist das fur sonderlich gros ding, als were hierin etwa ein zweivel oder seltzam new lere? Wer weis nicht, das Gott Gott ist, und das er gros ist, Wer hat je gehort, das Gott nicht Gott ist, oder das er klein sey. … Es laut eben, als wenn einer spreche: 'Es ist kein Esel, den ein Esel', 'Est ist kein kue [*sic*], denn eine Kue', 'Es ist kein Mensch, denn ein Mensch.' Man weis wol, das ein Ochs oder Hund kein Esel ist, auch Mensch oder Engel nicht Gott ist. Narren und Wansinnige mügen so reden.'

Rather than a mere tautology, the first clause of the Arabic rendering of the *shahāda*—*lā ilāha illa Allāh*—is indicative of a strong theocentric theology. In confessing 'there is no God' (*lā ilāha*), at the very level of grammar, there is an absolute negation of anything worthy of divinity and therefore worship. The conjunction (*illa*) denotes the only exception, God (*Allāh*). Luther had neither the tools nor the teacher to gain a better understanding of this.[117]

Likewise, he was only somewhat aware of the way the theocentrism of Islam worked out in relation to human agency. In a passage from *Vermahnung*, he explained that on account of the Turks' strong doctrine of determinism they were thus extremely courageous, to the point of fanaticism, during battle, for they were convinced that 'no one may die unless his fated hour has come.' This reckless abandonment, which, according to Luther, was akin to 'Epicurean philosophy', was one of the primary causes of the success of the Turks.[118]

In comparison to his brief comments on the determinism of Islam, Luther was acutely aware of Muslim theological anthropology. He noted that one of the most fundamental differences between the Christian and Islamic teachings on human nature was the rejection of the doctrine of original and hereditary sin. 'The doctrine concerning the cause of human infirmity, calamity, and death, especially the propagation of sin after the fall of the first parents has always existed in the church. This, Muḥammad, like an Epicurean, considers an absurd fable.'[119] He had in mind Qur'ānic passages on the absolution of Adam's sin shortly after creation and the preservation of his original righteousness before God as well as his elevated status over the angels (for example, 2:30–37, 7:19–25).[120] If all this were true then, Luther wrote, the Turks' 'strongest argument' was that, logically speaking, universal guilt and condemnation was inconceivable and only probable if God were terribly unjust.[121] Furthermore, without sin as a univer-

---

[117] Interestingly, there are parallels between Luther's theological theocentrism and Islam's. Cf. Jan Slomp, 'Christianity and Lutheranism from the Perspective of Modern Islam', in Hans Medick and Peer Schmidt (eds.), *Luther Zwischen den Kulturen* (Göttingen: Vandernhoeck and Ruprecht, 2004), 293; Philip Watson, *Let God Be God: An Interpretation of the Theology of Martin Luther* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1966).

[118] *Vermahnung*, WA 51:614.34–615.31 (LW 43:235–236).

[119] *Vorrede*, WA 53:572.4–7 (H-B, 266).

[120] See *In Genesin Enarrationum*, WA 43:581.28–35; *Predigt am Weihnachtstag, nachmittags*, WA 49:632.33–633.37.

[121] *Das fünffte, Sechste und Siebend Capitel S. Matthei*, WA 32:500.25–37 (LW 21:242).

sal condition of humankind there would be no need for a Saviour. If all this were true, then perhaps he would have, by necessity, embraced Muḥammad as his prophet, but he was, of course, convinced that the Qur'ān was wrong on this point and alleged that it was the result of 'the Devil speaking through Muḥammad.'[122]

The opinion that Satan spoke through Muḥammad who in turn recorded or was later recalled to have said these demonically inspired words naturally coloured Luther's impression of the Qur'ān.[123] Nevertheless, he was still able to grasp, mainly from Riccoldo, the significance of the Qur'ān in the life of Muslims. He knew that they firmly and unswervingly maintained that it is the word of God (*Gottes wort*) and that they derived religious, ethical, and legal teachings from it.[124] And although he mentioned that some of the Turkish interpreters of the Qur'ān 'make it their one aim to interpret [it] allegorically',[125] he was well aware of the general high regard for the literal Arabic text. The Qur'ān itself, noted Luther in reference to sūrah 42:7, was revealed in Arabic and Arabic alone, and therefore the Muslims would not translate it into another language.[126] Although he did not know it from experience, but rather from Riccoldo, he explained how the poetical and rhythmic nature of the Arabic text testified that it was 'the law of God revealed to Muḥammad' and that it 'proves that Muḥammad was a true prophet.'[127]

In response, Luther had an enormous amount to say about the law of God and the receptor (Muḥammad) of this law, but since the proceeding chapters will be devoted to Luther's engagement with the Qur'ān and its teachings, a short excursus on his impression of it will suffice for now. Generally, Luther regarded the Qur'ān as a spurious

---

[122] *Predigt am Weihnachtstag*, WA 49:632b.33–35: 'Jch gleubs, das der Teuffel uber dem Artickel den fall gethan, wie im Alckoran geschrieben, Das der Teuffel bekent durch den Mahometh.'

[123] Luther is very inconsistent on this point. In some places he suggests that Muḥammad *wrote* the Qur'ān even though he knew that it was recorded after Muḥammad's death.

[124] *Verlegung*, WA 53:284.27–28.

[125] *In Genesin Enarrationum*, WA 43:668.1–3 (LW 5:347).

[126] *Verlegung*, WA 53:340.19–20, 380.11–12.

[127] *Verlegung*, WA 53:292.32–33: 'Gesetz von Gott dem Mahmet offenbart'; 348.4–5: 'Und das sol beweisen, das Mahmet ein rechter Prophet sey.' It is not clear whether Luther knew Muḥammad was illiterate (or, really, unlettered), which, in Islamic thought, strengthens the grounds for the argument of Muḥammad's legitimate prophethood on the basis of the beauty and inimitability of the Qur'ānic text.

text. While he did occasionally note that it contained some good things (that is, its parallels to the Bible),[128] he was convinced and instructed his readers that it was the product of human imagination,[129] plagiarism from the Bible,[130] and, ultimately, demonic influence.[131] He described its contents, like Riccoldo, as a collection of 'sermons or doctrines' thought to be of divine origin, 'as if they were spoken out of the mouth of God.'[132]

While Luther read a very short description of the Muʿtazilite controversy,[133] he was not aware of the significance of the doctrine of the uncreated character of the Qurʾānic text. He was, however, for the most part correct in his view that the Arabic root of Qurʾān meant, like the Hebrew *qara'a*, to call out, recite, preach, or read.[134] He also knew that the message that was believed to have been sent down (*hinab gesand*)[135] was not only meant to be recited but also to replace former books or to restore the message that had been corrupted or altered (*gefelscht*) by Jews and Christians.[136]

As indicated above, there is mention in several places of Luther's works that Muḥammad and the Qurʾān abrogated previous books sent down by God.[137] He was also aware of the claim that the actual biblical

---

[128] *Vorwort*, WA 30/2:205.12–13; *Verlegung*, WA 53:326.10–11.

[129] *In Genesin Enarrationum*, WA WA 44:743.24–26 (8:225); *Reihenpredigten über Johannes*, WA 45:524.1–5 (LW 24:69).

[130] *Verlegung*, WA 53:354.25–26: 'Stellet Mahmet etwas, als ein Gesetze, durch seine gesellen, Nam etwas aus dem alten, etwas aus dem newen Testament.' Even though it borrowed from the Bible, Luther wrote, 'it leaves almost nothing of the Christian truth remaining' (*Vom kriege*, WA 30/2:126.10–12 [LW 46:181]).

[131] *Verlegung*, WA 53:352.15–16: 'Der erst Meister des Alcoran sey nicht ein Mensch, sondern der Teufel.' Cf. *Vom kriege*, WA 30/2:121.26–29 (LW 46:179).

[132] *Verlegung*, WA 53:276.34–278.1: 'Ein Gesetz lassen ausgehen … als were es aus dem Munde Gottes gesprochen, dasselbe hat er genennet Alcoran, das ist ein Summa oder versamlung, nemlich der Göttlichen Gebot' (cf. 358.23–360.2).

[133] *Verlegung*, WA 53:360.3–20.

[134] 'Strictly speaking, קרא means *ruffen, nennen*,' "to call," "to name," "to read from a book," "to preach." Sometimes it also means "to meet." Moreover, I believe that this is why Muḥammad titled his book the Alcoran; for it is a compilation, or a textbook or his Bible, as the pope calls his decretals. Here, therefore, we take this word to mean "to teach," or "to read in a public assembly"' (*Lectures on Genesis*, LW 5:79). EI^2 5:400 notes that *qara'a* is probably derived from the Syriac word (*qeryana*) used in early Christian liturgies to denote a 'Scripture reading, lesson.'

[135] *Verlegung*, WA 53:358.12.

[136] *Verlegung*, WA 53:286.27. This will be dealt with in chapter 7.

[137] On the Qurʾān's abrogation of former books, see Farid Esack, *The Qur'an: A Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oneworld, 2002), 49–50; Hava Lazarus-Yafeh, *Intertwined Worlds: Medieval Islam and Bible Criticism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992), 37–41.

texts had been corrupted (*taḥrīf al-lafẓ*), especially by the expunging of prophecies of Muḥammad from both the Old and New Testaments and the misinterpretation of the biblical text (*taḥrīf bi al-maʿnā*) such as the passages where Christ is purported to claim equality with God.[138] His understanding of this was, like so many others before him, limited, though, for he was only exposed to Christian responses to the charge of *taḥrīf*.[139] In any case, Luther was convinced that this lacked merit, not only because his unwillingness to believe that the Bible was corrupt but also because the reliability of text of the Qurʾān itself was questionable. After reading and translating Riccoldo's rendering of the history of the collection of the text, he noted in the margin, 'The Turks do not know where the Qurʾān came from.'[140]

Apart from that which is in the Qurʾān Luther also knew of a few Islamic traditions. The most notable of these and the ones he dwelled on most were Muḥammad's night journey (*al-isrāʾ*) and ascent into heaven (*miʿrāj*), which are recounted in chapter 14 of the *Verlegung*.[141] And from what he read in Georgius' *Tractatus* he also mentioned several references to Sufi legends of miracles in association with graves of holy men and women.

Also from Georgius he knew of the basic duties or five pillars of a Muslim's religious life. He first read of these in chapter 13 of the *Tractatus* where they are described in some detail. The *shahāda* is quoted in Turkish—*Layllaha hillallach mehemmet erczullach*—and, according to Georgius, citing the *communem opinionem* of the Turks for support, simply meant that 'God is one, and Muḥammad is his great prophet.'[142] Luther, translating Riccoldo (instead of Georgius), rendered it (accurately) into German: 'There is no God but God and Muḥammad is the messenger of God.'[143] In addition to the criticism mentioned earlier, he wrote in the margin that repeating this was as useless as saying the Ave Maria. The daily canonical prayers (*Salāt*), fasting during Ramadan (*Sawm*), taxes (*Zakāt*), and the *Hajj* were also known to Luther. A slight

---

[138] *Verlegung*, WA 53:286.25–26, 30–31; 334.3–5; 372.12–374.12.

[139] Muslim thought itself is diverse on this. See Abdullah Saeed, 'The Charge of Distortion of Jewish and Christian Scriptures', *MW* 92 (2002), 419–436.

[140] *Verlegung*, WA 53:358: 'Die Türcken wissen nicht, wo der Alcoran herkome.'

[141] *Verlegung*, WA 53:360.23–364.3. Merigoux notes that these were taken almost verbatim from *Liber denudationis* (*ClS*, 122n1).

[142] *Tractatus*, 254.27–30: 'Deus est unus, et Mechometus est propheta eius maior.'

[143] *Verlegung*, WA 53:300.1–2: 'Es ist kein Gott denn Gott, und Mahmet ist Gottes Apostel.' Cf. *CA*, WA 53:299.24; *ClS*, 81.28–29.

amount of admiration can be sensed from him as he learned of the piety of the Turks when he mentioned, 'the fasts, prayers, and common gatherings of the people that [the *Tractatus*] reveals are nowhere seen among us.' One should, however, make no mistake, for he often remarked that true faith in the true God 'has absolutely nothing to do with discerning what ceremonies, customs, or laws are better or worse, but declares that all of them squeezed together … are not enough for justification.'[144] And here is one of the chief errors of Islam, according to Luther, which rendered it a false religion. It taught that man was able to, by his own merit, achieve righteousness before God. Although a Muslim's display of righteousness surpassed, by far, any papist, it was still a religion that, in addition to rejecting formal articles of the Christian faith such as the divinity of Christ, Trinity, and the sufficiency of the Bible, was fundamentally flawed by its espousal of a righteousness that comes by works.

From the above analysis it is clear that Luther had a fair knowledge of Islam—both in terms of breadth and comprehensiveness. While Wolf's claim that his 'knowledge was unusually accurate' devoid of 'important gaps' is untenable, Fischer-Galati's and Hagemann's counter claims are equally unjustified when the overall context of the first half of the sixteenth century is taken into consideration. With the exception of a few of his younger contemporaries, for example, Theodor Bibliander and Guillame Postel, Luther's understanding was as broad and perceptive as anyone's knowledge was during his time and, according to contemporary research, surpassed most.[145] In addition to the historical context, his sources and obvious polemical and apologetic intent for his study of Islam enabled him to grasp several key points of contention between the Muslim and Christian religions.

It was the key points of contention between Islam and Christianity that made all the difference to Luther. While he could at times admire the prudence and discipline of the Turks, the theological doc-

---

144 *Vorwort*, WA 30/2:206.6–8, 207.28–30 (H-B, 259).

145 See Miller, 'Luther on the Turks', 79. Cf. Michael Heath, 'Erasmus and War against the Turk', in Jean-Claude Margolin (ed.), *Acta Conventus Neo-latini Turonensis*, vol. 2 (Paris: Vrin, 1980), 994; Katya Vehlow, 'The Swiss Reformers Zwingli, Bullinger, and Bibliander and their Attitude to Islam (1520–1560)', *ICMR* 6:2 (1995), 236; Jan Slomp, 'Calvin and the Turks', in Yvonne Haddad and Wadi Haddad (eds.), *Christian-Muslim Encounters* (Florida: University Press of Florida, 1995), 132; Fischer-Galati, 'Reformation and Islam', 56–58; Williams, '*Salus extra Ecclesia*', 351.

trines of the Qur'ān were simply irreconcilable with the exclusive claims of Christianity. Moreover, and more seriously, the teachings and many of the practices of Muslim Turks, such as the *shahāda*, posed serious problems with identifying and worshipping the one, true God. Still furthermore, formal theological questions aside, ultimately Islam threatened and, in fact, severed the gift of salvation offered to human beings through the gospel of Christ. By rendering Christ a mere human and, still worse, not crucified, Islam negated what Luther thought God had done for the salvation of humanity by rendering the gospel obsolete. Islam, in Luther's mind, simply reintroduced a new, albeit superior to Rome's, religion of works righteousness. It was from this, as he informed Philip Melanchthon in 1530, that he began to grow agitated with the Turks and Muḥammad,[146] and propelled him to begin formulating arguments against the religion of the Turks. The proceeding chapters analyse these attacks on Islam in two successive, distinct stages in order to elucidate Luther's approach to Islam.

[146] WA Br 5:285.7–10: 'Ego incipio totis animi affectibus in Turcam et Mahometum commoveri …'

PART TWO

MARTIN LUTHER'S ENGAGEMENT WITH ISLAM, 1529–1546

CHAPTER FIVE

LUTHER'S INITIAL CRITIQUE OF ISLAM

Luther's initial response to Islam was located in *Vom kriege widder die Türcken* (1529). The treatise's central concern was to provide conceptual clarification to the war so that it was, without exception, conceived of as a just war to be waged by secular officials, and not a crusade or holy war. This motif notwithstanding, *Vom kriege* also included a brief digression into Turkish Muslim ideology. Luther added this polemical excursus specificially to educate his readers on the malignant nature of Islam. By analysing what he understood to be religious, political, and domestic injunctions enjoined upon human beings in the Qur'ān, he hoped to convince his readers that one could not remain indifferent to the encroachment of the Ottoman Empire into Europe. To this end, it also acted as an apologetic of sorts for the preservation of what he considered the proper ordering of a civilization built upon general Christian principles by demonstrating that Islam posed more than a military problem to Christian Europe. Rather, he argued that it threatened the very existence of Christendom by imposing and perpetuating lies, murder, and unjust marital laws upon the world.

Die Dreiständelehre: *The Theological Worldview behind Luther's Critique*

Because Luther was convinced that the Devil was always at work in the world he inferred that the Qur'ān was the product of Muḥammad being possessed by Satan, and the Turks, by following the prophet and his 'blasphemous book', were servants in the army of the Devil.[1] A summary drawn from the end of his analysis of Islam illustrates the premises from which he drew this rather striking conclusion.

> What good can be in the government and whole Turkish way of life since according to their Qur'ān these three things reign freely among them:

[1] *Vom kriege*, WA 30/2:123.19–20; 124.12–14; 126.1–2, 6–20; 129.8–9 (LW 46:178, 179, 181, 184).

> namely lies, murder, and disregard for marriage? … Lies destroy the spiritual estate, murder destroys the temporal estate, and disregard for marriage destroys the estate of marriage. Now, if you take true religion, true political rule, and true economy out of the composition of the world (that is, true spiritual life, true temporal authority, true home life) what remains in the world except vain flesh, world and Devil?[2]

It might be tempting to dismiss Luther's allegations as hypberbole or Islamophobia, but despite his harsh caricturisation of the Turks as destroyers of religious truth, benevolent political rule, and virtuous domestic relationships between men and women in holy matrimony, there is a deep rational behind his initial critique of Islam.

By dividing his analysis into the categories of spiritual, temporal, and nuptial 'estates' Luther was working from what is commonly referred to as his doctrine of the three estates (*Dreiständelehre*). While it is typically viewed from the perspective of the Reformer's theological ethics, this doctrine was the lens through which he viewed the natural social order of humankind. It is thus necessary to obtain a basic understanding of the three estates and how they informed his perception of the world before turning to the Reformer's employment of this doctrine in his evaluation of the Turks and their religion.[3]

Various enlightening definitions have been put forward to describe the general concept behind the doctrine of the three estates. For example, Bernd Wannenwetsch explains it as 'the elementary and paradigmatic forms of social life that are appropriate to creaturely existence from the beginning …. [They] are created together with man in order to provide the social spheres that are necessary for a flourishing and obedient life.'[4] These 'forms of social life', typically called an 'estate', 'order', or 'hierarchy',[5] were also, as Oswald Bayer has observed, fun-

---

[2] *Vom kriege*, WA 30/2:127.7–17 (LW 46:182).

[3] Luther's utilisation of this doctrine has not received any attention in the secondary literature on Luther and the Turks or Islam. See, however, the brief allusions made to it in the literature concerned with his ethics in relation to the *Dreiständelehre*: Wilhelm Maurer, *Luthers Lehre von den drei Hierarchien und ihr mittelalterlicher Hintergrund* (München: C.H. Beck Verlag 1970), 22, 29; Reinhard Schwarz, 'Luthers Lehre von den drei Ständen und die drei Dimension der Ethik', *LuJ* 45 (1978), 15–34.

[4] Bernd Wannenwetsch, 'Luther's Moral Theology', in Donald McKim (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Martin Luther* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 130.

[5] See Bernard Lohse, *Martin Luther's Theology: Its Historical and Systematic Development*, trans. Roy Harrisville (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1999), 322; Wannenwetsch, 'Luther's Moral Theology', 130.

damental to his perception of the world.[6] Johannes Schwanke, using Luther's own analogy, explains this by describing the visible, created world as a house. Its roof is the heavens, soil its foundation, and oceans its walls. And plants and animals furnish the kitchen and cellar with the necessary items to sustain human life. Beyond this visible 'living space', however, is an extra dimension of life, which is invisible but nonetheless discernible from the pages of Scripture. They are the estates 'granted to human beings as promised living and work places.'[7] These fundamental estates of human life were threefold, according to Luther, and were called, as in *Vom kriege*, the 'spiritual', 'worldly' or 'temporal', and 'marital' estates or the estates of 'religion', 'politics', and 'economy' or 'home life.'[8] A host of other terms, from his vast literary corpus, could be listed as well. Whatever one he applied, though, they were conceived to be the fundamental spheres of human activity, preordained (*vororten*) by God and created with humankind (as *concreatae*) in primordial history,[9] which were to 'remain throughout all kingdoms, as wide as the world and to the end of the world.'[10] And without them Luther thought that the world would regress into chaos.

---

[6] Oswald Bayer, *Schöpfung als Anrede: Zu einer Hermeneutik der Schöpfung*, 2nd edn. (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 1990), 54.

[7] Johannes Schwanke, 'Luther on Creation', *LQ* 16 (2002), 8–11. This analogy comes from *In Genesin Enarrationum*, WA 42:26.41–27.7, 29.28–31, 355.21–33; 44:17.32–41, 78.3–10 (LW 1:35–39; 6:24–25, 105).

[8] *Vom kriege*, WA 30/2:127.7–17 (LW 46:182).

[9] *Sermon von dem Sakrament der Taufe*, WA 2:734.24 (LW 35:39); *In Quindecim Psalmos Graduum*, WA 40/3:222.35–36.

[10] *Der hundert und eilfte Psalm*, WA 31/1:410.16–17 (LW 13:369). John Stephenson argues: 'The "three orders" scheme is an adumbration of the traditional Lutheran distinction of the inter-relation of "economic, political and ecclesiastical man" *within the bossom of Christendom*' (John Stephenson, 'Drei Stände, Zwei Regimente und Zwei Reiche—Three Orders, Two Governments and Two Kingdoms', *Evangelium: Zweimonatschrift für Lutherische Theologia und Kirche* [1985], 48–60 [emphasis added]). While this is not an entirely unwarranted conclusion, it fails to take into account some of the more ambitious and universal statements made by Luther, such as the one cited above. Stephenson's limitation of the jurisdiction of the three estates has apparently been influenced by the Lutheran systematic theologian Johann Gerhard (1582–1637) who described the 'distinct estates which have been divinely instituted with the Church' in his massive *Loci communes theologici* (1610–1622) as thus: 'These estates or orders (status sive ordines) instituted within the Church by God are three in number, namely the ecclesiastical, the political and the domestic (ecclesiasticus, politicus et oeconomicus), and they are customarily called hierarchies (hierarchies). The domestic order performs its order by increasing the human race; the political order by defending the same; and the ecclesiastical order by advancing the eternal salvation of mankind. God instituted the domestic order to counter roving lusts; the political order to resist tyranny and

Luther's earliest statements regarding the origin and shape of the three estates were made even before his break with Rome. In 1519, for example, in what Werner Elert claims was his first remark concerning their establishment, Luther identified the marital (*eelichen* [*sic*]), spiritual (*geystlichen*), and governing (*regirenden*) estates as having been ordained by God at creation.[11] While he continued to refer to and employ his three estate doctrine for the following decade and a half, particularly in his criticism of the invention of the monastic estate (*Monchsständ*),[12] because they were created alongside humanity, his clearest statements concerning the establishment and shape of them are found in his lectures on the earliest record of human history, the first chapters of Genesis.[13] This poses a slight problem with defining the content of the doctrinal framework through which Luther critiqued Islam in 1529, for his lectures on Genesis were delivered six years afterwards in the mid-1530s until 1545. Thus, in addition to using the *Genesisvorlesung* to identify the shape and content of his *Dreiständelehre*, other earlier works have been taken into consideration in order to ensure a consistency between his understanding of the three estates in 1529 and during his Genesis lectures beginning in 1535.[14]

The spiritual estate was, for Luther, synonymous with the church. While his understanding of the structures within the visible church went through considerable development, the spiritual aspect of the church or spiritual estate remained virtually unchanged. At its most fundamental

---

robbery; and the ecclesiastical order to withstand heresies and doctrinal corruptions' (quoted in Stephenson, 'Drei Stände', 54).

[11] Elert, *Morphologie*, 2:52 (with reference to *Sakrament der Taufe*, WA 2:734.24 [LW 35:39]); cf. Maurer, *Luthers Lehre*, 19.

[12] See Elert, *Morphologie*, 2:52–57; Maurer, *Luthers Lehre*, 19–28.

[13] The reliability of the Genesis lectures, due to their transmission, is, according to some scholars, questionable (see LW 1:1–2). However, this is not the case with his numerous references to the three estates found throughout the lectures since the same ideas can be found elsewhere. Moreover, recent research has regarded earlier scepticism over the reliability of the text's transmission as an overreaction. See Schwanke, 'Luther on Creation', 1; Lohse, *Luther's Theology*, 323; and especially Hans-Ulrich Delius, *Die Quellen von Martin Luthers Genesisvorlesung* (Munich: Kaiser, 1992), 12.

[14] According to Wilhelm Maurer, the content and structure of Luther's *Dreiständelehre* was already in place early on in his career and, whatever developments it underwent, it reached its highpoint in 1529. Thus, from his extensive research, in addition to what Oswald Bayer has confirmed (see *Schopfung*, 54–60; 'Nature and Institution: Luther's Doctrine of the Three Orders', *LQ* 12:2 [1998], 126–132), it is clear that the doctrinal makeup of three estates found in Luther's Genesis lectures is equivalent to that which he used as a device to critique Islam.

level 'what persists … is the unconditional pre-eminence of the Word and the definition of the church as the fellowship of those who hear it.'[15] The historical foundation of this spiritual estate took place when God first spoke to Adam in Genesis 2:16–17—'And God commanded Adam saying, "eat from every tree of the garden but do not eat from the tree of he knowledge of good and evil …"' According to Luther, here, in the earliest days of human history, was the creation of the *ecclesia* and the spiritual or religious estate. 'God gave Adam Word, worship, and religion in its barest, purest, and simplest form, in which there was nothing laborious, nothing elaborate …. Only this he wants: that he praise God, that he thank Him, that he rejoice in the Lord, and that he obey him by not eating from the forbidden tree.'[16] But the fall ruined all of this; Adam and Eve were now guilty of sinful disobedience. Nevertheless, after observing how they both hid from God after eating the forbidden fruit (Genesis 3:8), Luther took notice of how God did not leave them to their own devices. Rather, by a 'very great measure of grace' he sought after them and, most importantly, in the promise of a 'seed', who would crush the serpent's head (Genesis 3:15), delivered a new word to the primogenitors of humanity. This new word that would shape the church, whose members inherited Adam and Eve's guilt, from that point forward was, according to Luther in Genesis, nothing less than the 'preaching about Christ.'[17] The new redeemed *ecclesia* and thus the spiritual estate was now defined by the promise of the gospel. And because Satan would remain on the prowl and 'in various ways continue to corrupt sound doctrine' and human nature, damaged as it was by sin, was no longer able to retain proper 'knowledge of God, faith, fear, etc', the writing down of God's Word in *sacra Scriptura* became necessary.[18] The boundaries of the religious estate were consequently established and could be identified by people and institutions that adhered to the Scriptures and the preaching of Christ.[19] Therefore, as will be shown below, when Luther evaluated Islam through the lens of his *Drieständelehre*, in terms of its inclusion in the divinely ordained spiritual estate, he did so almost exclusively with reference to its Christology.

---

[15] See Lohse, *Luther's Theology*, 277–278.
[16] *In Genesin Enarrationum*, WA 42:42:77.23–85.5 (LW 1:103, 105–106).
[17] *In Genesin Enarrationum*, WA 42:134.4–135.34, 142.1–41 (LW 1:180–181, 190).
[18] *In Genesin Enarrationum*, WA 42:80.1–81.42, 123.4–124.38 (LW 1:106, 165).
[19] *Vorrede auff das Alte Testament*, WA DB 8:11.13–21 (LW 35:235–236, 237).

Luther also detected the establishment of the household or, more technically, the domestic estate in the early pages of Genesis, beginning at the creation of Eve. The blessed union between the man and woman and procreation that followed gave shape to all subsequent human relations.[20] Consequently, Luther thought that all human beings were created for marriage (although he noted that there were some rare exceptions). 'For it is not a matter of free choice or decision but a natural and necessary thing, that whatever is a man must have a woman and whatever is a woman must have a man.'[21] Accordingly, he believed that not only was the marital union indissoluble, but it was 'not an exceptional estate, but the most universal and the noblest, pervading all Christendom and even extending throughout all the world.'[22] Furthermore, as was evident to him not only from the Scriptures but, he also added, human reason, it was to be the sacred and inseparable union between one man and one woman.[23] Two things naturally followed from Luther's definition of marriage as an inseparable union of a man and a woman. First, he was adamantly opposed to divorce.[24] 'Every man should keep his own spouse, sustaining and bearing good and ill with her, even though she may have her oddities, peculiarities, and faults', he wrote. God 'has given every man his spouse, to keep her and for his sake to put up with the difficulties involved in married life.' Therefore, human beings have 'no right to make marriage a free thing, as though it were in our power to do with as we pleased, changing and exchanging.'[25] Secondly, he condemned the practice of

---

[20] *In Genesin Enarrationum*, WA 42:87.11–13 (LW 1:115).

[21] *Vom Ehelichen Leben*, WA 10/2:276.17–20 (LW 45:18).

[22] *Der Großer Katechismus*, BELK, 613: 'Darümb ist es nicht ein sonderlicher, sondern der gemeineste, edleste Stand, so durch den ganzen Christenstand ja durch alle welt gehet und reichet.'

[23] '[Marriage] is the inseparable union of one man and one woman, not only according to the law of nature but also according to God's will and pleasure' (*In Genesin Enarrationum*, WA 43:294.36–37 [LW 4:222]). Luther even speculated that if humans were permitted to take as many partners or spouses as they wished they would still long for a single spouse. 'If God, out of extraordinary kindness, had not instituted this union of one man and one woman, with what great desire the whole world would long for it, so that it could be freed from lust and defilement through this remedy!' (*In Genesin Enarrationum*, WA 43:452.19–21 [LW 5:34]).

[24] This, of course, was not mere deduction from his definition of marriage. Rather, it was based on his observation of Christ's words in Matthew 19:6: 'What God has joined together, let no man put asunder' (see *Das fünfft Capitel S. Matthei*, WA 32:378.4–22 [LW 21:94–95]).

[25] *Das fünfft Capitel S. Matthei*, WA 32:378.7–9 (LW 21:94–95). There were, however, three grounds for the dissolution of a marriage. First, spouses who were unable to fulfill

polygamy. Observation of his reflection on numerous cases from the Old Testament as well as contemporaneous events, however, demonstrates that he was quite flexible in such matters. Explaining cases of polygamy in the patriarchal era, Luther noted that Moses' 'rule in marriage is of a completely different character than ours.'[26] Moses' law permitted a man to have more than one wife whereas it was completely 'out of order' among Christians living in the German Empire.[27] In any case, the 'lawful and divine union of one man and one woman'[28] was 'ordained' by God for the purpose of the 'preservation and education

---

their conjugal duties, and who really were unfit for marriage in the first place, were permitted to divorce so that they might be fruitful and multiply. Second, in the case of adultery the other spouse could legitimately seek a divorce. (For the adulterer, Luther suggested the death penalty.) And thirdly, if either of the spouses 'deprives and avoids the other, refusing to fulfil the conjugal duty or to live with the other person' they may seek a divorce so long as the erring spouse has been warned two or three times and the situation has been publicly rebuked. On occasion Luther also conceived of a fourth reason for divorce. If a husband and wife could not get along with each other for some legitimate reason 'other than the matter of the conjugal duty'—for example, 'a rude, brutal, and unbearable husband'—they may divorce. However, they must not seek remarriage (*Vom Ehelichen Leben*, WA 10/2:276.1–20, 287.13–292.6 [LW 45:19–20, 30–34]).

[26] *Von Ehesachen*, WA 30/3:225.15–17 (LW 46:291).

[27] For further explanation, see *Von Ehesachen*, WA 30/3:225.24–29 (LW 46:291); *In Genesin Enarrationum*, WA 42:582.8–10 (LW 3:46). Continuing with his thought on polygamy, Luther also instructed his students that they should not be of the opinion 'that much license was given to sexual lust among the Jews, since polygamy was not only permitted but even commanded' (WA 42:582.8–10 [LW 3:47]). Nor should they think that polygamous heathen cultures were necessarily morally deficient. On the contrary, he wrote, citing the ancient Egyptian and Palestinians, history proved that 'the decency of those nations was extraordinary' (WA 42:480.7–13 [LW 2:305]). 'Similarly', he added, 'some foreign nations continue the practice of polygamy even now' and it gives 'support and permanence both to their household and to the government' (WA 42:233.17–24 [LW 1:317]). Luther was acquainted with at least two high profile cases of bigamy amongst Christians, that of Henry VIIIth and Philip Landgrave of Hesse. On the case of Henry VIIIth, see his letter to the Englishman Robert Barnes WA Br 6:178–182, 183–188 (LW 50:27–40). His involvement with the latter (Philip of Hesse) reveals the most about his attitude towards bigamy and divorce. For the complicated story, see Heinrich Boehmer, *Luther in the Light of Recent Research*, trans. E.S.G. Potter (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1930), 213–224. To summarise, Luther begrudgingly approved of the Landgrave's marriage to Duke George of Saxony's ugly daughter Margaret von der Sale for two reasons, although he thought that the prince was 'out of his mind' for wanted to take on another wife (WA TR 4:655.13–15 [LW 54:388]): first, since bigamy and polygamy had many 'well-known examples in the Scriptures' and, secondly, since divorce was to be avoided at all cost Luther gave his quiet approval to the marriage (WA TR 4:625.24–628.15 [LW 54:382]).

[28] *In Genesin Enarrationum*, WA 43:558.35–37 (LW 5:188).

of offspring' for both the church and the state and the continual population of the church with worshippers.[29]

Whereas the domestic estate was established to give shape to the relationships between men and women and, by extension, their children, the third estate—the political or temporal—was established to govern the relationships of human beings outside the family. Unlike both of the former estates, however, the political estate only became necessary after sin was introduced into the world. 'There was no government of the state before sin, for there was no need of it. Civil government is a remedy required by our corrupted nature. It is necessary that lust be held in check by the bonds of the laws and by penalties.'[30] The divine institution of the civil government was not limited to Christian communities, nations, or empires, either. Rather, Luther believed that God had 'made, and makes, all communities.'[31] 'God himself created and established [kings and nations], and divided up the world for them to rule.'[32] So, for Luther, a government did not need to be run by a Christian in order for it to be a divine institution. On the contrary, he suggested that it was often the case that non-Christians made better civil rulers.[33] So long as a government, through powers of reason, maintained peace, promoted prosperity, and punished the wicked it was a good and divine thing. In other words, Luther thought that 'God establishes government and gives it the sword', even governments of non-Christian peoples,[34] for the purpose of making 'men out of wild beasts and to prevent men from becoming wild beasts.'[35] There was a limit to the jurisdiction of civil government's authority, however. When worldly authorities begin to infringe upon the conscience of human beings they were overstepping their boundaries. A person's conscience,

---

[29] *In Genesin Enarrationum*, WA 43:559.4–6 (LW 5:188). Also see *Vom Abendmahl Christi Bekenntnis*, WA 26:504.25–505.5, 505.23–25 (LW 37:364). He called the marital estate the nursery (*seminarium*) of the church and state (*In Genesin Enarrationum*, WA 42:178.31–33 [LW 1:240]).

[30] *In Genesin Enarrationum*, WA 42:79.7–10 (LW 1:103–104). There are times when Luther suggested that the worldly government was established at creation (W.D.J. Cargill Thompson, *The Political Thought of Martin Luther* (Sussex: Harvester, 1984), 66–67).

[31] *Des LXXXII. Psalmus*, WA 31/1:193.30 (LW 13:46).

[32] *Der Cxvij. Psalm*, WA 31/1:234.9–10 (LW 14:14).

[33] Thompson, *Political Thought*, 70–71.

[34] *In Genesin Enarrationum*, WA 42:360.25–29 (LW 2:139–142); cf. *Predigt am 23. Sonntag nach Trinitatis*, WA 27:418.2–5. This meant that Christians were obliged to obey their rulers regardless of their religious persuasion.

[35] *Eine Predigt Mar[tin]Luther das man kinder zur Schulen halten sole*, WA 30/2:555.5–6 (LW 46:237).

especially in matters of faith, was untouchable, 'for faith is a free act, to which no one can be forced.' In fact, Luther wrote, 'God cannot and will not permit anyone but himself to rule over the soul. Therefore, where temporal authority presumes to prescribe laws for the soul it encroaches upon God's government and only misleads souls and destroys them.'[36] 'No ruler ought to prevent anyone from teaching or believing what he pleases, whether it is the gospel or lies. It is enough if he prevents the teaching of sedition and rebellion.'[37] Governments that persecute freedom of belief—and Luther has in mind Christian belief—therefore are not exercising their authority as God intended, for they were battling against God's word. So Luther instructed that a Christian need not obey an authority in this case and this case only.[38] However, in all other matters an 'evil' government ought to be obeyed for it 'remains an authority, as every rational man knows; for if God no longer regarded evil authorities as valid authorities, all subjects would be absolved of their duty.'[39] All authorities who ensured peace and stability for their subjects by punishing the wicked and protecting the good and, moreover, subjects who supported and obeyed their authorities were all 'engaged in pure holiness and leading a holy life before God.'[40]

These three distinct but overlapping spheres or estates of human activity—*religio, politia*, and, *oeconomia*—were established by God in the natural order for the benefit of humankind. And although they were introduced in primordial history they were applicable and regulatory for all successive generations, continuing and remaining 'throughout all kingdoms, as wide as the world and to the end of the world.'[41] All human beings everywhere were meant to exist within their parameters. Those who lived outside them or created their own estates or orders,

---

[36] *Von welltlicher Uberkeyt*, WA 11:262.9–12 (LW 45:105).

[37] *Ermahnung zum Frieden auf die zwölf Artikel der Bauerschaft in Schwaben*, WA 18:299.18–20 (LW 46:22).

[38] Paul Althaus, *The Ethics of Martin Luther*, trans. Robert Schultz (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1972), 128.

[39] WA Br 6:341, quoted in Althaus, *Ethics*, 128.

[40] *Vom Abendmahl Christi Bekenntnis*, WA 26:505.11–16 (LW 37:365). Luther went on to make a distinction between 'holy' and 'saved.' In this context, a person is 'holy' by their external righteousness. 'Even the godless may have much about them that is holy without being saved thereby.' A person is only 'saved' through faith in 'Christ alone.'

[41] *Der hundert und eilfte Psalm*, WA 31/1:410.16–17 (LW 13:369). Cf. Schwanke, 'Luther on Creation', 3. Wannenwetsch is helpful on this point when he writes that Luther did not 'conceive of them as (some type of Kantian) "pure forms" existing *prior* to humankind, into which men and women must be squeezed to fit, nor as mere functions of cultural history *subsequent* to the creation of man, as arbitrary developments at man's

such as with monasticism, 'live in a self-elected kind of life which, throughout the prophets, God rejects and condemns.'[42] He condemns them because not only were they meant to 'serve the protection and preservation of the creation.' They also acted as foundations and safeguards against the onslaughts of the Devil,[43] who is constantly trying to destroy the temporal (marriage and civil government) and spiritual estates.[44] He knows that God works in the world through them,[45] hidden from its eyes as the work of *Deus absconditus*, in order to keep it from regressing into chaos.

> We see that God maintains peace in the world and checks rebellion. There is no continual rebellion and disturbance; for these stations are God's work and ordinance, over which He steadfastly rules. … It is God's work to have distinct stations in the world, and that these make for right and righteousness and thus preserve the peace.[46]

The three estates or orders, if distinguished rightly and properly understood, also ensured civil and social righteousness.

> Where such stations operate as they should, there things go well in the world, and there is the very righteousness of God. But where such stations are not maintained, it makes for unrighteousness. Now God declares concerning these stations that they must remain if the world is to stand, even though many oppose and rage against them. Therefore the psalmist says that His righteousness endures forever. All sects and man-made righteousness will finally perish, but these stations remain and preserve righteousness in the world.[47]

---

disposal.' Rather, they were, as Luther called them, *concreatae*, created alongside human beings for their benefit ('Luther's Moral Theology', 131).

[42] *In Genesin Enarrationum*, WA 43:152.14–15 (LW 4:23). Cf. *Der hundert und eilfte Psalm*, WA 31/1:411.16–34 (LW 13:371). Luther's accusation that monasticism was a human invention is, interestingly, also found in Q 57:27.

[43] Lohse, *Luther's Theology*, 323.

[44] The issue of the relationship between the doctrine of the three estates and Luther's more famous doctrine of the two kingdoms (treated briefly on pages 75–77 and, more thoroughly, at 154–156) has not received adequate if any significant scholarly attention. While Stephenson's article, mentioned in note 10 above, represents one interpretation. More scholarly attention is needed to resolve the question of how these two aspects of Luther's thought enmesh. In short, however, it seems that, for Luther, the two kingdoms are descriptive categories explaining generally how God rules the earth whereas the three estates, although they certainly diverge into God's twofold governance of creation, are both descriptive and prescriptive of human activity within the sacred and temporal spheres.

[45] All of Scripture testified to this, Luther thought. See WA TR 5:218.14–18 (LW 54:446).

[46] *Der hundert und eilfte Psalm*, WA 31/1:410.18–27 (LW 13:369).

[47] *Der hundert und eilfte Psalm*, WA 31/1:399.34–400.6 (LW 13:358).

If true religion, political life, and marriage and family life are the foundation of God's creation and the perpetuation of the human race, it follows, then, that the opposite—false religion, politics, and marriage—are the work of the Devil and 'the foundation of hell.'[48] Where one could detect such opposition to the divine estates in history, one could identify the work of the Devil—who was always at work in the world attempting to destroy human life and community.

Islam and the Three Estates

It was noted above that Luther had heard reports of some Germans expressing a desire for or at least remaining indifferent to Ottoman rule.[49] He thought that this was probably due to western perceptions of their political stability and military superiority. Another factor contributing to this, he thought, was the rumour that the Ottoman government granted religious freedom. It was believed that, in exchange for loyalty, whoever submitted to the Turks would be permitted to remain a Christian. This was, according to Luther, 'not true, for [the Turk] does not allow Christians to come together in public and no one can openly confess Christ or preach or teach against Muḥammad. What kind of freedom of belief is it when no one is allowed to preach or confess Christ?' On the contrary, he was convinced that the primary agenda of the Turks was the expansion of the sphere of Islam, and, while Christianity could and did exist under the Ottomans, he was sure that this was a ploy to slowly stamp it out. 'Since, therefore, faith must be stilled and held in secret among this wild and barbarous people and under this severe rule, how can it exist or remain alive in the long run, when it requires so much effort and labour in places where it is preached most faithfully and diligently?' If the Turks were to have their way in Germany, one would see a phenomenon similar to that in lands already conquered by the Ottomans: Christian captives and subjects of the Turks routinely abandoned their faith for Islam or 'became altogether Turkish.' So with the threat of apostasy increasing Luther wrote, 'we must pray against the Turks as against other enemies of our salvation.' Accordingly, 'in this connection the people should be told about the Turk's dissolute life and ways.' Since nothing was available

[48] *Vom kriege*, WA 30/2:128.1 (LW 46:182).
[49] See pages 74, 85–88 above.

to the German public on the life of the Turks in the spiritual and temporal realms he set out to relate to his readers what information he had acquired. However, because so much false information was being spread he would only report on what he was able to verify was accurate information. He knew or at least thought it to be accurate because it was derived from 'several parts of Muḥammad's Qurʾān.'[50] His subsequent outline and critique of Islam was divided into three sections, each corresponding to what he considered the three fundamental spheres of human life, the three estates.

Luther's first allegation against Islam was that it destroyed the spiritual estate by attempting to remove true religion from the world by replacing God's word with lies. As noted above, the formal basis for all truth was Christ and the Scriptures. The Turks had already circumvented the Scriptures by relying upon the Qurʾān, which consequently also re-envisioned the person and work of Christ. While he noted that Muslims praised him as a 'holy prophet' who was 'without sin' it also maintained several falsehoods about his nature and, consequently, his 'office'. Turkish Muslims believed that Christ was nothing more than a prophet, equivalent to all other prophets. They denied, on the basis of the Qurʾān, that he was the son of God and, especially, that he was true God. Furthermore, they asserted that his office or mission came to an end when he died. 'He preached to his own time and completed his work before his death, just like any other prophet.' On this basis, Luther alleged that the teachings of the Qurʾān about Christ were false, thus rendering a distortion to the substance and, in fact, destruction of the spiritual estate.[51]

It was not just the denial of the divine nature and salvific work of Christ that caused Luther to levy the charge of destroying the spiritual order against Islam. The role or, in his words, office of Muḥammad in Muslim thought also contributed to it for he perceived the finality and universality of Muḥammad's prophethood—the chief point (*heubtstuecke*) of the Turkish faith—to be nothing short of the supplanting of Muḥammad for Christ and Islam for Christianity.[52]

---

[50] *Vom kriege*, WA 30/2:120.25–121.30 (LW 46:175–176). In reality, it was derived from the *Confutatio Alcorani*'s rendering of the Qurʾān. Cf. Bobzin, *Der Koran*, 90.

[51] The passages, or, in several cases, paraphrases from the Qurʾān included in *Confutatio Alcorani*, which Luther had in mind are: Q 4:171 (*CA*, WA 53:285.21–22, 367.35–36); 5:46 (*CA*, WA 53:381.14–16); 23:91 (*CA*, WA 53:337.6–9).

[52] Here he probably had Q 33:40 in mind, which is summarised in *CA*, WA 53:329.1–3.

> Muḥammad highly exalts and praises himself and boasts that he has talked with God and the angels, and that since Christ's office of prophet is now complete, he has been commanded to bring the world to his faith. … Therefore the Turks think that their Muḥammad is much higher and greater than Christ, for the office of Christ has come to an end and Muḥammad's office is still in force.

'From this', he continued, 'anyone can easily see that Muḥammad is a destroyer of our Lord Christ and his kingdom.' By denying the classical expression of Christ's person and work, Islam destroyed the foundation and structure of Christianity. 'If anyone denies the articles concerning Christ, that he is God's son, that he died for us and still lives and reigns at the right hand of God, what has he left of Christ? Father, Son, Holy Ghost, baptism, the sacrament, gospel, faith, and all Christian doctrine and life are gone.'[53] Without these all that was left was Muḥammad and 'his doctrine of works and especially of the sword.'

Luther did not spend much time describing what he called Muḥammad's doctrine of works nor, surprisingly, his mutilation of the Reformation doctrine of justification, but he did elaborate on what he meant by the doctrine of the sword. From selected passages of the Qur'ān he was under the impression that Muslims envision themselves as people chosen by God to call the world to Islam and, 'if the world is not willing, to compel it or punish it with the sword.'[54] Finding this particularly horrendous and not unlike what he called a theology of glory—whereby works, external appearances, and physical triumph were viewed as marks of true religion rather than suffering and humility typified in what he called a theology of the cross[55]–he continued telling his readers that 'there is much glorification of the sword' in the Qur'ān. The propagation of faith through force was not only a telltale sign of a theology of glory, though, for it also grossly blurred the lines between the spiritual and secular estates wherein there was to be, as even the Qur'ān claims but Luther failed to see (although it is located

---

[53] He did note some similarities and even common points of faith. 'The Turks perform the same holy works as some of our monks and hope for everlasting life at the Judgment Day, for, holy people that they are, they believe in the resurrection of the dead, though few of the papists believe in it' (*Vom kriege*, WA 30/2:123.3–6 [LW 46:177]).

[54] Here he is referring to Q 9:29 (*CA*, WA 53:303.10–12) and Q 21:5–7 found in three places in *Confutatio Alcorani* (WA 53:309.4–8, 361.34–37, 365.1–4), which is, however, poorly rendered. Also see Q 8:39 and 9:33.

[55] On Luther's *theologia crucis*, see Alister McGrath, *Luther's Theology of the Cross: Martin Luther's Theological Breakthrough* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1985).

in the *Confutatio Alcorani*), no compulsion in religion.[56] Obvious proof of Islam's theology of glory and commingling of the two estates was, in Luther's mind, physically manifest in the havoc the Turks had wreaked for nearly a century in eastern Europe. And Luther was sure from the verses he had read that all this was taught and condoned in the Qurʾān.

The reduction of Christ to a mere prophet whose office came to an end at his death and, conversely, the elevation of Muḥammad to the office of universal prophet was, according to Luther, the basic theological lie of Islam. Without the incarnation and the subsequent doctrine of the deity of Christ there was no true spiritual estate. And since Islam perverted the office of Christ—relegating him to the position of a mere human with no divine attributes and therefore no power over sin and death, as promised to Adam and Eve in the garden which in principle defined the true *ecclesia*—it destroyed the spiritual estate. He therefore concluded, 'In the article that Christ is beneath Muḥammad, and less than he, everything is destroyed', and he warned that with the spread of Islam the spiritual estate was being destroyed, true religion was being taken out of the world, and all that would remain was a religion inspired by the Devil.[57]

Following his analysis of Islamic religious beliefs Luther evaluated the Turks' political ideology. 'In the second place', he wrote, 'the Turk's Qurʾān or creed teaches him to destroy not only the Christian faith, but also the whole temporal government.' Temporal government, properly conceived and rightly administered, was nothing more than the protection of a community or nation by an official or several officials against both internal and external enemies of peace and justice. Only as a means of self-defence was a temporal government to impose itself upon another nation. By contrast, Muḥammad and the Qurʾān condoned and revelled in the forceful and violent expansion of Islamic lands.[58] Thus, as experience showed, the Ottoman Empire was nothing but a murderous regime and an illegitimate temporal government when it engaged in forceful expansion. 'It is not a godly, regular rulership, like others, for the maintenance of peace, the protection of the good, and the punishment of the wicked', he wrote. In fact, it was the very opposite. It was true, he admitted, that empires—even so-called

[56] See Q 2:256 paraphrased in *CA*, WA 53:303.16–17.

[57] *Vom kriege*, WA 30/2:122.1–123.18 (LW 46:176–178).

[58] In addition to Q 21:5–7 (see note 54 above), he also probably had 8:41 (*CA*, WA 53:351.14–16) and a paraphrase of 9:29 (*CA*, WA 53:303.10–12) in mind.

Christian ones—seldom came 'into being except by robbery, force, and wrong', but the Ottoman Empire was the epitome of such. 'Never has any kingdom come into being and become so mighty through murder and robbery as that of the Turk.' This was not a mere coincidence, however, for 'robbing and murdering, devouring and destroying more and more of those that are around them, is commanded in their law as a good and divine work; and they do this and think that they are doing God a service.' And as they carried out their murderous and larcenous activities their convictions were fed by the gains they incurred for the 'work of murdering and robbing pleases the flesh in any case because it enables men to gain high place and to subject everyone's life and goods to themselves.' Furthermore, 'How much more must the flesh be pleased when this is a commandment, as though God would have it so and is well pleased by it! So it is among the Turks that the most highly regarded are those who are diligent to increase the Turkish kingdom.'

This was no real surprise to Luther, though, for already with the exposure of the Ottoman religion as a fraud it was obvious that, in order to propagate its lies, it would have to employ force. The Devil is a liar and a murderer, according to John 8:44, thus Luther noted that one should expect religious lies to be accompanied with politically charged murder. 'With lies he kills souls and with murder he kills bodies. If he wins with a lie, he does not take a holiday and delay; he follows it up with murder.' Although he did not have facts to support his allegation, Luther noted that this was manifest in the history of Islam.[59] 'When the spirit of lies had taken possession of Muḥammad, and the Devil had murdered men's souls with his Qur'ān and had destroyed the faith of Christians, he had to go on and take the sword and set about to murder their bodies.' The Turks, then, in following Muḥammad had not made their 'progress by preaching and the working of miracles', like Christianity, but rather, following the lies of the Qur'ān, 'by the sword and by murder.'

This was nothing new, however, for most fanatics had done the same, but to a lesser degree. Luther related a story of how the heretical Arians, twelve hundred years prior, had become murderers after succumbing to the lies of Arius who was also inspired by the Devil. And further, Augustine—eleven hundred years prior—reported similar activities amongst the heretical Donatists. More recently, though, he referred

[59] Some modern scholars would certainly agree. See, most recently, Efraim Karsh, *Islamic Imperialism: A History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006).

to the apocalyptic revolutionary Thomas Müntzer and his followers, who he had only recently, during the Peasant Revolt of 1525, said were 'doing the Devil's work … particularly the work of that archdevil who rules at Mühlhausen.'[60] 'What was Müntzer seeking in our own times, but to become a new Turkish emperor?' Luther wrote. 'He was possessed by the spirit of lies and therefore there was no holding him back; he had to take on the other work of the Devil, take the sword and murder and rob, as the spirit of murder drove him, and he created a rebellion and such misery.' The supreme example of lies leading to murder, however, was to be found in the history of the papacy. If one were to investigate they would soon find that the church had become a worldly authority whose 'principal business' was arousing men to take up the sword and wage war instead of attending to preaching and prayer. 'Is it not true that [the pope] and his bishops have become worldly lords, and, led by the spirit of lies, have fallen away from the gospel and embraced their own human doctrine, and thus have committed murder down to the present hour?' Just 'read the histories', Luther insisted, and therein one would see how 'the pope, along with his followers, wages war, commits murder, and robs not only his enemies, but he also burns, condemns, and persecutes the innocent, the pious, the orthodox, as a true Antichrist.' And he does this while claiming to be the world's bishop and head of the church or, in the language of Paul (2 Thessalonians 2:4), 'while sitting in the temple of God.' Even 'the Turk does not do that', he exclaimed. Nevertheless, both were equally culpable.[61] The Turks, however, because of their unlawful war on the West, and the chaos accompanying it, were guilty of overthrowing legitimate forms of government and disrupting the peace. They were therefore guilty of destroying the temporal estate.

Luther's final and briefest criticism of Islam was that it destroyed the estate of holy matrimony by undermining the security of the marital union through liberal exercise of divorce. 'The third point is that Muḥammad's Qur'ān has no regard for the estate of marriage', he wrote, 'but permits everyone to take wives as he will.'[62] Ottoman Muslims especially took advantage of this for 'it is customary among Turk-

[60] *Wider die räuberischen und mörderischen Rotten der Bauern*, WA 18:357.13–14 (LW 46:49).
[61] *Vom kriege*, WA 30/2:123.19–126.20 (LW 46:178–181).
[62] Luther's information for this comes from *CA* (WA 53:317.7–20), which seems to have paraphrased Q 2:230.

ish men to have ten or twenty wives.' What was worse was that they 'desert or sell any whom they will' treating them no better than cattle. Even though there were certainly exceptions to this, he continued, 'this is nevertheless the law and anyone who wants to can follow it.' So he concluded that Muslim marriage was so insecure that it was fraudulent. 'God's word says in Genesis [2:24], "Therefore a man cleaves to his wife and they become one flesh."' When a Turk takes a wife he does not have the 'intention of staying with her forever as though the two were one body.' Rather, Luther sarcastically remarked, Muslim marriage 'resembles the chaste life soldiers lead with their prostitutes.' This 'kind of living is not and cannot be marriage.' 'In all of history we do not read of such desecration and destruction of marriage', he continued commenting on Turks and papists alike. 'The pope, under the pretense of chastity, has forbidden marriage and condemned it as sinful.' Unlike the papacy, which destroyed the estate of marriage by restriction of marriage, though, the Turks destroyed it by legitimising liberal divorce thereby disregarding the sacred inseparable union between one man and one woman.[63]

Islam in the Final Analysis

Luther's assessment of the Turks and Islam, which he claimed was based upon excerpts from the Qur'ān, demonstrated several things. To begin with, although the Turks appeared to be 'holy people', his analysis showed that there was nothing good 'in the government and whole Turkish way of life.' Three things ruled among them: lies, murder, and disregard for marriage. With lies, they destroyed the spiritual estate. Through constant warfare and, along with it, murder for the sake of the expansion of its domain, they destroyed the temporal estate. And in their weakening of true marriage, they destroyed the estate of matrimony. In other words, they took 'out of the world *veram religionem*, *veram politiam*, *veram oeconomiam*, that is, true spiritual life, true temporal government, and true home life.' Thus, Luther concluded, all that was left was 'flesh, world, and Devil', which, through Ottoman imperialism, was being spread throughout the world. As he put it towards the close of *Vom kriege*,

[63] *Vom kriege*, WA 30/2:126.21–127.2 (LW 46:181–182).

> Now we have heard above what kind of man the Turk is, that he is a destroyer, enemy, and blasphemer of our Lord Jesus Christ, a man who instead of the gospel and faith sets up his shameful Muḥammad and all kinds of lies, ruins all temporal government and home life or marriage, and his warfare, which is nothing but murder and bloodshed, is a tool of the Devil himself.[64]

By attempting to replace but in fact destroying the three estates the Turks were destroying 'the spiritual order of faith and truth', and its incitement of 'murder destroys all temporal order which has been instituted by God.'[65] Muḥammad and the Qurʾān, from whom the Turks had received their 'marching orders', were therefore guilty of nothing less than attempting to supplant the divine order in creation. Without these ideals, Christian Europe and human society as God intended it would collapse.

The destruction of this order was the Devil's *modus operandi*. 'The Devil keeps … three things—lies, murder, and disregard of marriage—as the real foundation of hell.'[66] From this, he then inferred, as he did so often with the papacy, that Islam and the Turks were instruments of Satan. For Islam, like the papacy,[67] was just another guise of the Devil seeking out the destruction of the spiritual and temporal realms of human life. Therefore, he instructed his readers that Christians needed to 'pray against the Turks as against other enemies … indeed, as [they] pray against the Devil himself.' Identifying this in even more specifically with the cosmic struggle between God and the Devil, Luther identified the Turks with Gog and Magog, 'the last tyrant in Christ's Kingdom', as prophesied in Ezekiel 38–39.[68] Within a year, he would add more weight to this conclusion when he found the rise of the Ottoman Empire prophesied in Daniel chapter 7.

Luther's assessment of the Qurʾān's teachings made the true nature of Islam evident. The lies that the Qurʾān told about the person and work of Christ and Muḥammad's theological coup to usurp his office

---

[64] *Vom kriege*, WA 30/2:139.5–10 (LW 46:195).

[65] *Vom kriege*, WA 30/2:126.14–16 (LW 46:181).

[66] *Vom kriege*, WA 30/2:127.27–128.1 (LW 46:182).

[67] 'Just as the pope is the Antichrist, so the Turk is the very Devil incarnate'; 'And just as Herod and the Jews hated each other, though both stood together against Christ, so Turk and papacy hate each other, but stand together against Christ and his kingdom' (*Vom kriege*, WA 30/2:126.1–2, 144.1–7 [LW 46:180, 200]).

[68] *Vom kriege*, WA 30/2:146.16–18 (LW 46:202); cf. *Vorrede auf den Propheten Hesekiel*, WA DB 11/1:393.33–34 (LW 35:283).

was evidence enough that Islam destroyed the religious estate. The imperialist policy of the Ottomans, encouraged if not mandated by the Qur'ān clearly destroyed the political estate, most notably by the chaos and murder resulting from unprovoked and aggressive warfare. And Luther's perception of the liberal practice of divorce and free exchange of women endorsed by the Qur'ān was enough to warrant his charge that the Turks were contemptuous of true marriage.

It was ultimately the Devil who was really behind these things for he sought nothing other than to destroy the fabric and foundation of God's creation. Luther therefore connected the two and drew the conclusion that the Turks, under the influence of Muḥammad and the Qur'ān, were being used by the Devil in his continuous war with God. Through Islam, the *regnum Diaboli* was laying siege to the *regnum Dei* by seeking direct, unbridled control over the world through the destruction of its foundation.

The blatant and cosmic danger that Islam posed to Christendom and the entire divine order in creation caused Luther great concern. Although his conclusions were really nothing new, how he reached them, through his three-estate analysis, was unique and, at least for him and his readers who were acquainted with his theology, amplified the nature of the threat. His analysis, although highly polemical and from a contemporary standpoint idiosyncratic, if not propagandistic, served to defend the Christian faith by illustrating the differences between Christianity and Islam therefore leaving no excuse for indifference in responding to the Turks.

The immediate danger, however, was the possibility that Christians, as potential subjects of the Turks, would eventually convert for whatever reason to the religion of their authorities. So Luther began, sobered by his initial evaluation and alarmed by the siege of Vienna, to offer specific advice for those who might someday find themselves amongst Muslim Turks tempted by the claims of Islam in his next work, *Eine Heerpredigt widder den Türcken*.

CHAPTER SIX

AN EXISTENTIAL APOLOGETIC FOR CHRISTIANS IN THE *MAHOMETISCH REICH*

Luther's initial assessment of the 'whole Turkish way of life' made evident what he thought were the fundamental ideological problems with Islam and the threat it posed to the sociological fabric woven into human communities. In late 1529, after Süleyman laid siege to Vienna, the level of the threat was raised as Luther began to fear that those who had been taken captive would be tempted to embrace the religion of the Turks. From his earlier analysis as well as his understanding of the Turks as Gog and Magog and now, in *Eine Heerpredigt widder den Türcken*, the eschatological antagonists of the church, he was convinced that 'the Devil was seeking through his army of Turks clearly not only worldly authority but also to push the Kingdom of Christ and its saints and members out of the faith.'[1] He therefore felt compelled to offer pastoral advice to Christians either in danger of becoming captives or those already imprisoned or enslaved in Turkey. An analysis of Luther's advice in a hitherto unexamined portion of Luther's *Heerpredigt* reveals his early thoughts on how a Christian should deal with the temptations one might experience under the Ottomans, and, especially, how one might respond to the *Anfechtung* caused by the allure of Islam.

Anfechtung *and the Christian Predicament*

Luther was no stranger to temptations and doubts over the veracity and legitimacy of his own faith. He often referred to such episodes of spiritual *Angst* as *Anfechtung*, which, although it literally translates 'temptation', implies an assault of doubt and despair upon a human being. These attacks were conceived by Luther to be both objective and subjective. Alister McGrath writes, 'It must be emphasised that Luther

[1] *Heerpredigt*, WA 30/2:160.11–14, 161.27–29: 'Der teuffel sucht durch seinen zeug den Tuercken, freilich nicht allein die weltliche herschafft, Sondern auch das reich Christi und seine heiligen und glieder vom glauben zu stossen.'

does not regard *Anfechtung* as a purely subjective state of the individual. Two aspects of the concept can be distinguished, although they are inseparable: the *objective* assault of spiritual forces upon the believer, and the *subjective* anxiety and doubt which arise within him as a consequence of these assaults.'[2] Also important to grasping the nature of *Anfechtung* in Luther's thought is the distinction he made between 'satanic' and 'divine *Anfechtung*.' The former aroused doubts over fundamental matters of faith such as the certainty of one's salvation and even the veracity of one's religion whereas the latter, by imposing the burden of God's law and thereby making a person aware of their wretched sinful condition, caused one to dread the future retribution of God at death and the Second Coming.[3] Both were ultimately mediums through which God worked as *Deus absconditus* in order to lead one to the crucified Christ,[4] but satanic *Anfechtung*, which God permitted rather than immediately directed, was certainly more dangerous for if the one experiencing it permitted it to prevail they would be led away from Christ.

In any case, Luther thought and taught that every Christian was susceptible to and should expect to be subject to these spiritual crises throughout their life.[5] He wrote, 'every Christian has his temptations. He who would believe, let him reconcile himself to the fact that his faith will not stay untempted. The Devil will do all he can to quench the spark of faith before it comes to a flame.'[6] In 1527, along with external troubles such as the arrival of the plague in Wittenberg and ill health, Luther himself experienced turbulent bouts of *Anfechtung*, so much so that he began to experience doubt over his theological convictions. 'He was repeatedly tortured by questions as to whether or not he really was in the right and the world of enemies that confronted him in the wrong.'[7] In short, the question that plagued him since at least as far back as the Diet of Worms (1521) was: 'Are you alone wise, righteous, and blessed?' Amidst the diversity of human opinion presently and historically was he, Luther, right and everyone else in

---

[2] McGrath, *Luther's Theology of the Cross*, 170.

[3] In addition to McGrath's invaluable analysis (*Theology of the Cross*, 172–174), see Horst Beintker, *Die Überwindung der Anfechtung bei Luther: Eine Studie zu seiner Theologie nach den Operationes in Psalmos 1519–1521* (Berlin: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 1954), 80–82.

[4] McGrath, *Theology of the Cross*, 151, 172–173.

[5] See Gordon Rupp, *The Righteousness of God* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1953), 105; McGrath, *Theology of the Cross*, 171.

[6] *Dominica Reminiscere. Matth. 15*, WA 29:63.11–64.1, quoted (but reference to WA corrected) in Rupp, *Righteousness of God*, 105.

[7] Lohse, *Martin Luther*, 25.

error? Recalling one such occasion, which arose from some seemingly problematic passages of Scripture, he wrote,

> Whoever is interested may learn a lesson from my example, which I shall now confess. A few times—when I did not bear this principal teaching [of justification by faith] in mind—the Devil caught up with me and plagued me with Scripture passages until heaven and earth became too small for me. Then all the works and laws of man were right, and not an error was to be found in the whole papacy. In short, the only one who had ever erred was Luther. All my best works, teaching, sermons, and books had to be condemned. The abominable Muḥammad almost became my prophet.[8]

Although this is almost certainly hyperbole, it nevertheless reflects what he feared might happen to Christians living as captives amongst Muslims: that they, through demonically inspired temptation or satanic *Anfechtung*, might, rather than running to the crucified and risen Christ, embrace Muḥammad as their prophet and Islam as their religion.

This concern was especially heightened after he heard reports of the many thousands of Germans who had been captured during the siege on Vienna. How would they remain Christians and at the same time live as dutiful citizens of the Ottoman Empire, a *Mahometisch Reich* governed by the Qurʾān?[9] After all, his teaching on the political estate mandated that regardless of the religious persuasion of one's civil authority, so long as they did not impose their faith on their subjects, their subjects were obliged to obey them as a divinely established worldly authority. He had expressed this, in relation to the Ottoman threat, already in 1518 when he wrote, 'if one were captured by the Turks or unbelievers … he is constrained to give obedience according to the precept of the gospel.'[10]

While Luther was positive that Christians could and must live and work amongst Muslims, he was very concerned for their spiritual well being. Even though the Turks allowed non-Muslims to remain in their own belief he knew that they did not permit any external witnesses to the Christian faith. This meant that in Turkey or elsewhere throughout the Ottoman Empire Christians would only really be surrounded by external appearances of Islam, and would most likely be tempted in various ways to adopt the religion of the Turks. Before proceeding to what he thought might tempt someone to embrace Islam and his

[8] *Der Cxvij. Psalm*, WA 31/1:255.33–356.7 (LW 14:37).
[9] *Heerpredigt*, WA 30/2:168.5, 15–16.
[10] *Resolutiones disputationum de indulgentiarum virtute*, WA 1:553.32–38 (LW 31:122).

consequent instructions for how to respond, a basic outline of the motifs behind his pastoral advice, in light of the context of Christians living in the domain of Islam, needs further explanation.

Life in the Two Kingdoms

Regardless of whether or not Christians lived under 'Christian' authorities or not, according to Luther, they were still citizens of the spiritual and worldly realms of God's rule. The nature of human citizenship in both spheres is defined by what is generally called his doctrine of the two kingdoms.[11] There are a host of difficulties associated with this doctrine as is evidenced by the vast array of scholarly interpretations on the subject and their resulting controversies,[12] but the root of the problems seems to be, as W.D.J. Cargill Thompson has observed, from the fact that under the label of what is called the doctrine of the two kingdoms lies a 'complex of doctrines.'[13] Further complicating the matter, however, is Luther's application of this doctrine to the various controversies arising within the Protestant Reformation as well as his inconsistent use of terminology. Nevertheless, this aside, from his early consideration of this doctrine in the 1523 pamphlet *Von welltlicher Uberkeyt* and his subsequent writings on the subject two main aspects emerge, which mark the predominant themes of the two-kingdoms doctrine. The first characteristic of this doctrine concerns the dual nature of humankind's existence.

> Man is divided between two kingdoms, in one of which he is directed by his own choice and counsel, apart from any precepts and commandments of God, namely, in his dealings with the lower creatures. Here he reigns and is lord, as having been left in the hand of his own counsel. Not that God so leaves him as not to cooperate with him in everything, but he has granted him the free use of things according to his own choice, and has not restricted him by any laws or injunctions. … In the other kingdom, however, man is not left in the hand of his own counsel, but is directed and led by the choice and counsel of God, so that just as in his own kingdom he is directed by his own counsel, without regard to

---

[11] See pages 75–77 above for a slightly different perspective of the doctrine of the two kingdoms.

[12] See, among others, Lohse, *Luther's Theology*, 151–159, 314–320, *Luther*, 186–193; Thompson, 'The "Two Kingdoms" and the "Two Regiments": Some Problems of Luther's *Zwei-Reich-Lehre*', in *Studies in the Reformation: Luther to Hooker* (London: Athlone Press, 1980), 42–59.

[13] Thompson, *Political Thought*, 36. Also see his 'Problems of Luther's *Zwei-Reich-Lehre*', 42–43.

> the precepts of another, so in the Kingdom of God he is directed by the precepts of another without regard to his own choice.[14]

Luther taught that the lives of human beings were dichotomous. As spiritual creatures they were created to live in what he often termed the spiritual realm (*das geistliche Reich*) and as temporal creatures they live in the temporal realm (*das weltliche Reich*). The spiritual realm consisted solely of humanity's relation to the divine through the medium of faith whereas the temporal involved practically everything else—human relationships of all kinds (political, marital, parental, vocational, etc).

Integrally linked to what could be called the *Zwei-Reiche* aspect of Luther's two-kingdom thought was his conception of the twofold governance of humankind by God or the *Zwei-Regimente-Lehre*.

> God has established two kinds of government among men. The one is spiritual; it has no sword, but it has the word, by means of which men are to become good and righteous, so that with this righteousness they may attain eternal life. He administers this righteousness through the word, which he has committed to the preachers. The other kind is worldly government, which works through the sword so that those who do not want to be good and righteous to eternal life may be forced to become good and righteous in the eyes of the world. He administers this righteousness through the sword. And although God will not reward this kind of righteousness with eternal life, nonetheless, he still wishes peace to be maintained among men and rewards them with temporal blessings. … Thus God himself is the founder, lord, master, protector, and rewarder of both kinds of righteousness. There is no human ordinance or authority in either, but each is a divine thing entirely.[15]

The basic idea of this aspect of the two-kingdom doctrine is that God rules his creation in two different ways—through word, on one hand, and the sword, wielded by secular rulers, on the other. The spiritual life of humanity is prescribed and ruled by the word of God (Scripture, Christ, and the sacraments—the 'visible word') in the spiritual government (*das geistliche Regiment*). The temporal life of humanity is, however, subject to the divinely sanctioned offices of secular government (*das weltliche Regiment*). The distinction between the two kingdoms, both in terms of realms and governments, was necessary for several reasons,

---

[14] *De servo arbitrio*, WA 18:672.8–19 (LW 33:118–119).
[15] *Ob Kriegsleute*, WA 19:629.17–630.2 (LW 46:99–100).

not the least to protect the jurisdictions of the secular government from infringement of the church and vice versa.[16]

Luther applied this doctrine to various circumstances.[17] For instance, as discussed above, his rejection of the crusade was prompted by his conviction that the church had no business in affairs of secular government. This was perhaps one of the grossest examples of the church's infringement upon the secular domain.[18] Whereas from the other side of the two kingdoms spectrum, Duke George of Saxony's attempt to ban Luther's translation of the New Testament in 1523 was just as crass. Imagining the plight of Christians living in the Ottoman Empire, but still subject to God's two kingdom rule, the situation was thus to Luther's mind: Christians, regardless of where they lived—even in the *Mohametisch Reich*–were still citizens of the spiritual *Reich* and *Regiment* of God. Only, because of the prohibitions on public preaching and reading of Scripture, they would need to find alternative ways to hear or at least be reminded of the word of God. The life of Christians as citizens of the temporal *Reich* and *Regiment* would likewise be different under the authority of the *Türckisch odder Mahometisch Reich*, for because worldly authorities were ordained by God he considered it to be a Christian obligation to obey their Turkish masters. In fact, as will be shown below, Luther thought that Christian enslavement was itself ordained by God. The basic pastoral dilemma that faced Luther in considering how Christians living in the Ottoman Empire, then, was how could they, while experiencing especially satanic *Anfechtung*, maintain their faith in Christ all the while remaining obedient servants of their Muslim rulers? The advice that Luther gave to Christians who either were or might be exposed to this quandary flowed from his distinction between the two kinds of righteousness.

Two Kinds of Righteousness

The origins of Luther's teaching on the two kinds of righteousness can be traced back to his early bouts of *Anfechtung*, which arose, according to his later recollections, from his grappling with the biblical text and its definition of righteousness. How was a human being, devoid of

---

[16] See Steven Ozment, *Protestants: The Birth of a Revolution* (New York: Doubleday, 1991), 122–134.

[17] See Lohse, *Luther's Theology*, 151–159.

[18] See pages 75–77 below.

righteousness on account of the fall and through the continual actualisation of his or her sinful condition, to be counted righteous in the sight of God (*coram Deo*) and therefore saved? For Luther, ever since his so-called theological breakthrough,[19] the answer was his doctrine of justification. Human beings stood righteous *coram Deo* because God had imputed the righteousness of his Son to them through simply trusting that the crucifixion of Christ was a propitiatory atonement for the sins of human beings, not because they earned it but because God, in his mercy, desired to do so. When Luther spoke of this 'alien'[20] and, later, 'passive'[21] righteousness that was imputed to humans through faith he always connected it to Christ. 'Luther could not speak of restored human righteousness in God's sight apart from Christ. For sin had indeed destroyed that righteousness which consisted in trust in the Creator. Christ took sin into himself and substituted himself for sinners before the law's tribunal' or God's holy righteousness.[22] Since Christ, especially his death on the cross, was of the essence, faith in him was the only resolution of the various forms of *Anfechtung* one might encounter as one's sinful nature and God's punishing righteousness were realised.[23] In connection with the spiritual realm of God's rule, one simply needed to turn towards and rest assured in the merits of Christ to be a citizen of good standing in the spiritual kingdom of God.

This conception of human righteousness, which is obtained and maintained apart from any meritorious works on the part of the receiver, is of course prone to fostering antinomianism. The question therefore posed was: how are Christians, with no requirement to live aright for the attainment of their salvation, to live before the world (*coram mundo*) under the secular government? Are Christians therefore

---

[19] For Luther's own recollection from 1545, see *Vorrede zum ersten Bande der Gesamtausgaben seiner lateinischen Schriften*, WA 54:179–187 (LW 34:336–337). The date when Luther came to his 'discovery' of the reformation doctrine of justification by grace through faith on account of Christ is the subject of an enormous amount of controversy, which is of no concern to this study. For an overview of the various scholarly interpretations, however, see among others, Lohse, *Luther's Theology*, 87–88; *Martin Luther*, 25–27.

[20] See, for example, *Sermo de duplici iustitia*, WA 2:145.7–10 (LW 31:297).

[21] See, for example, *In epistolam S. Pauli ad Galatas Commentarius*, WA 40/1:41.15–26 (LW 26:4–5).

[22] Robert Kolb, 'Luther on Two Kinds of Righteousness: Reflections on His Two Dimensional Definition of Humanity and the Heart of His Theology', *LQ* 13 (1999), 462.

[23] Beintker, *Überwindung der Anfechtung*, 115–178; McGrath, *Theology of the Cross*, 173–174.

free to do as they please? Should they, as St. Paul put it in Romans 6:1, continue to sin so that grace may abound? Luther answered this question by distinguishing between 'passive' and 'active righteousness.' Whereas the former was 'instilled in us' through faith, the latter, which was a 'product' of or response to the former, was a 'manner of life spent profitably in good works', not for the attainment of righteousness *coram Deo*, this was a *fait accompli* through faith, but for the attainment of righteousness *coram mundo* and no further.[24] There were several ways to actualise this righteousness, but in short what constituted good works was guided by Luther's principle of loving and serving one's neighbour, as he expressed in one of his most important early works, *Von der Freyheyt eynisz Christen menschen* (1520). In light of the fact that a 'Christian is a perfectly free lord of all, subject to none' on account of his justification, he or she is also 'a perfectly dutiful servant of all, subject to all.'[25] One's service to their neighbour, according to Luther, included all secular authorities. Christians were thus under obligation, not as a matter of obtaining righteousness in the soteriological sense, to actively pursue the attainment of active civil righteousness. In connection to the temporal dimension of the two-kingdoms doctrine, this meant that this aspect of Christian righteousness *coram mundo* even extended to the Turks in *mundo muslimo*.

To further elucidate Luther's distinction of 'passive' and 'active righteousness' Kolb introduces it in terms of 'the righteousness of identity' and the 'righteousness of performance.'[26] This is especially helpful in casting the principles from which Luther offered his pastoral advice. As will be evident below, his suggestions to Christians in the Ottoman Empire were concerned with both aspects of ensuring Christian righteousness. He was interested with how he could encourage captives to retain their 'identity' as a righteous person *coram Deo*, that is, remaining a convinced Christian in spite of assaults of *Anfechtung*, and, at the same time, to encourage their 'performance' as a Christian *coram mundo muslimo*.

One must, however, never blur the distinction between the righteousness that saves and the righteousness that serves. Luther considered this to be the most distinct aspect of his theology. 'This is our theology, by which we teach a precise distinction between these two kinds of righ-

[24] *Sermo de duplici iustitia*, WA 2:146.32–147.18 (LW 31:299–300).
[25] *Von der Freyheyt eynisz Christen menschen*, WA 7:21.1–4 (LW 31:344).
[26] See Kolb, 'Two Kinds of Righteousness', 453–455.

teousness, the active and the passive, so that morality and faith, works and grace, secular society and religion may not be confused.'[27] Maintaining this distinction was not only necessary for the right profession of faith but it was also necessary for warding off satanic *Anfechtung*. Before observing how Luther applied his teaching to Christians who were currently experiencing *Anfechtung* as captives of the Turks, his thought on the cause of such temptations needs to be explained.

Anfechtung *and the Allure of Islam*

After reading the second half of *Heerpredigt* it becomes clear that Luther drew most, if not all of his information, from the testimony of Georgius de Hungaria. According to the former captive, the prevailing reason why the Turks permitted Christians to live after conquering their land was to bring about their conversion.[28] Georgius had himself been on the brink of converting to Islam during the initial years of his captivity.[29] So, after his successful escape, in order to benefit other potential captives he provided a list of the various temptations that they might experience. Drawing from the harrowing report of Georgius' *Tractatus de moribus, condictionibus et nequicia Turcorum*, Luther likewise let his German readers know what might scandalise their faith or cause them *Anfechtung* should they be taken into the Ottoman Empire.[30]

The first thing that Luther thought one should be aware of was the devotion displayed by Muslim clerics. Compared to the clergy of the papacy and even the most austere monastic orders they were by far superior in devotion and spiritual demeanour. 'Their priests or clerics lead such a serious, courageous, strong life that one might take them for angels and not men. All our clerics and monks in the papacy are a joke compared to them.'[31] Not only did they lead a more disciplined religious life, but some were able to perform amazing ascetic spiritual feats. A few, referring to practices and phenomena

---

[27] *In epistolam S. Pauli ad Galatas Commentarius*, WA 40/1:45.24–27 (LW 26:7).

[28] *Tractatus*, 192–194.

[29] See Classen, 'Turks', 264.

[30] *Heerpredigt*, WA 30/2:186.24–25.

[31] *Heerpredigt*, WA 30/2:187.1–4: 'Yhre priester odder geislichen [*sic*] solch ein ernst, dapffer, strenge leben fueren, das man sie moecht fuer Engel und nicht fuer menschen ansehen, das mit allen unsern geistlichen und moenchen ym Bapstum ein schertz ist gegen sie.' Cf. *Tractatus*, 272, 282.

common to the dervish orders in sixteenth- century Turkey (rather than amongst the Sunnī orthodox),[32] were capable of achieving trance-like states such that 'they sit as if they were dead' and others even 'occasionally performed great miraculous signs. Now who should not be worried and moved by such?'[33] Luther seems to have thought that Christians, who took such things as signs of a divinely ordained faith, would find that the Turks surpassed the most spiritually-gifted Christian monk and therefore would begin to question the legitimacy of their religion.

The second aspect of Turkish Muslim religious culture that might make Christianity appear inferior to Islam was, according to Luther, its humbling devotion to prayer. Paying close attention to Georgius' awe-inspiring descriptions of the Turks at corporate prayer,[34] he explained that one should expect to be awestruck by their formal worship, particularly in comparison to Christian worship. He wrote, 'you will also find that they gather in their churches [that is, mosques] to pray. Their manner of prayer is with such discipline, stillness, and external beauty that among us in our churches such discipline and stillness cannot be found anywhere.'[35] Also in contrast to western Christian culture, the modesty that women showed at religious gatherings was especially noteworthy. Not only were they as reverent as their male counterparts, but in seemingly sincere humility they covered themselves from head to toe. Their modesty and devotion along with the general external appearances of their gatherings was so striking that 'imprisoned brothers in Turkey complain about our folk, that they do not behave or appear so still, orderly, and spiritual even in our churches.'[36] Luther was all too aware of the poor state of parish life amongst Germans. He had only recently surveyed the churches in electoral Saxony, during the visitations of the

---

[32] For examples of the peculiar and interesting behaviour and practices of Ottoman dervish orders, see Karamustafa, *God's Unruly Friends*, 65–84; Zhelyazkova, 'Islamization', 256–258.

[33] *Heerpredigt*, WA 30/2:187.5–7: 'Sie sitzen als weren sie tod, Thun auch zuweilen grosse wunderzeichen dazu, Wen solt nu solchs nicht ergern und bewegen?'

[34] *Tractatus*, 260.

[35] *Heerpredigt*, WA 30/2:187.18–21: 'Zum andern wirstu auch finden das sie ynn yhren kirchen offt zum gebet zu samen komen und mit solcher zucht, stille und schoenen eusserlichen geberden beten, das bey uns ynn unsern kirchen solche zucht und stille auch nirgent zu sinden ist.' Cf. *Tractatus*, 262.

[36] *Heerpredigt*, WA 30/2:187.22–24: 'Auch unsere gefangen brueder ynn der Turckey klagen uber unser volck, das nicht auch ynn unsern kirchen so still, ordentlich und geistlich sich zieret und stellet.' Cf. *Tractatus*, 262.

late 1520s, and found them appalling. His basic fear was that if a German Christian used to such irreverence during worship encountered these acts of propriety and devotion, then they might infer or at least be inclined to consider this religion—at least the devotion displayed by its adherents—as superior.

The third potential problem to Christian consciences was the testimony of miracles. Georgius reported that the Turks, particularly those associated with dervish orders, often made pilgrimages to the graves of saints, and, at these sites, miracles were purported to have occurred. Similar practices were found amongst Christians with their patron saints. So Luther thought that if a Christian heard or witnessed such things it would certainly cause them to wonder about the exclusivity of the Christian claim to truth. He therefore told his readers that they should expect to 'find them making pilgrimages to Turkish saints, who died not in the Christian faith, but in Muḥammad's faith, as they confess and boast.'[37] And, he continued, many great miraculous signs are said to have occurred at these places.[38] He must have thought that the pilgrimages to the graves of Turkish saints and the alleged miracles that happened there would have been particularly appealing to Christians for, as will be shown below, he offered extensive advice on what to think about such things.

The fourth element of Turkish culture that Luther related to his readers was the overall piety of Muslims. Added to what he had already described relating to the discipline of their clerics, he also noted how they did not drink wine or eat pork. Neither did they dress frivolously or too pretentiously. Their buildings were modest in decoration. There was equality amongst the people. They did not curse. They showed great obedience and honour towards their sultan and other officials. And their government was firm but fair.[39] All these things 'we would gladly have in Germany', Luther wrote.[40] However, one must be very careful for what they wish. Certainly no one would want what came with it, for along with all these respectable things also came the Turkish marital laws whereby marriage, as God ordained it, was destroyed (although Luther was quick to point out that Germans were just as

---

[37] *Heerpredigt*, WA 30/2:188.8–10: 'Zum driten wirstu auch walfarten zu den Tuerckischen daselbst finden, die doch nicht ym Christen glauben, sondern ym Mahometh glauben gestorben sind, wie sie bekennen und rhuemen.'

[38] *Heerpredigt*, WA 30/2:188.12–13. Cf. *Tractatus*, 286–296.

[39] *Heerpredigt*, WA 30/2:189.26–31. Cf. *Tractatus*, 220–224.

[40] *Heerpredigt*, WA 30/2:190.1: 'Wirs gerne haben wolten ynn Deudschen landen.'

guilty of defiling marriage).[41] Because the above elements of Turkish society might be construed as desirable Luther was concerned that Christians might not be able to see that by submitting to them they would also be opening themselves up to the dangerous religious beliefs that accompanied them.

The final factor that Luther thought might cause a Christian *Anfechtung* was the seemingly absent justice of God, which should, according to the Christian mind, punish the infidel Turks. Instead, by all appearances it seemed that the Turks—and not Christians—were God's chosen people. They had become so powerful, as was evident in the numerous victories against the West, that they became resolute in their faith. Luther continued, 'They have become so obstinate, hard, and obdurate that one might think that it is impossible to convert a Turk.'[42] All of this caused them to 'maintain that there are none so vile as the Christians and no more shameful faith than the Christian faith. And that is why they pass judgement in such excessively high spirit, blaspheme and scandalise Christ and his Christians, boast among one another, mock and say: Christians are women. The Turks are their men.'[43] If a Christian were to think that military and political might was a sign for God's election and heard the Turks boasting, then this could, eventually, cause a Christian to reconsider his association with the religion of what appeared to be the reprobate West.

Pastoral Advice for Christians in the Mahometisch Reich

In order to encourage potential and current captives of the Turks in their Christian faith Luther offered several suggestions for how to think about and respond to the aspects of Islam mentioned above. As he wrote in the second half of the *Heerpredigt* after his exegesis of Daniel 7,

---

[41] *Heerpredigt*, WA 30/2:190.1–14. Luther is much more critical than Georgius de Hungaria on Turkish marriage practices. Cf. *Tractatus*, 242, 248–252; Classen, 'Turks', 273.

[42] *Heerpredigt*, WA 30/2:191.8: 'Sie so starrig, hart und verstockt werden, das man meinet, es sey unmueglich einen Tuercken zu bekeren.'

[43] *Heerpredigt*, WA 30/2:191.9–13: 'Halten sie, das kein erger volck sey, denn die Christen und kein schendlicher glaube, denn der Christliche glaube, Und fallen daher ynn solchen uberschwenglichen hohmut zu lestern and zu schenden Christum and seine Christen, das sie unternander rhuemen, spotten und sagen: Die Christen sind Weiber, Aber die Tuercken sind yhre Menner.'

'Enclosed I must also put an exhortation and give consolation to Germans already captive in Turkey or who might still become captive.'[44] Just as Jeremiah reported that the Jews had fallen from the faith for the magnificent appearances of the Babylonian faith he had read and heard about Christians doing the same under Turkish captivity. 'Several Christians have fallen away and willingly and freely accept the Turk's or Muḥammad's faith because of the great appearances that they have in their faith.' 'Therefore', he continued, 'take notice my dear brothers be warned and admonished so that you remain in the true Christian faith and that you do not deny or forget your dear Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, who died for your sins.'[45] This was his primary concern: that Christians remain in the faith, that is, to exhort them in the ways and means by which they were righteous *coram Deo*. He also had another concern: he wanted to exhort his readers in their Christian life, that is, how, while being righteous in Christ, they were to pursue righteousness *coram mundo muslimo*. No matter what the circumstances or how strong the *Anfechtung* he sought to give them a theology that could stand the trials of life.

Luther began by instructing his readers to learn the basic catechetical content of their faith. He wrote,

> So learn the creed now, while you still have room and place, the Ten Commandments, your Our Father and learn them well, particularly this article that we confess: 'And in Jesus Christ his only son our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of he virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and buried, descended into hell, on the third day rose from the dead, ascended into heaven, sitting at the right [hand] of God the Almighty Father, from which he will come to judge the living and the dead,' etc.[46]

By singling out the second article of the Apostles' creed Luther highlighted what he thought was absolutely essential for a Christian to

---

[44] *Heerpredigt*, WA 30/2:185.18–20: 'Hiebey ich auch eine vermanung thun und einen trost geben den Deudschen, so bereit ynn der Tuerckey gefangen sind odder noch gefangen moechten werden.'

[45] *Heerpredigt*, WA 30/2:185.25–31: 'Die Christen seer abfallen und des Tuercken odder Mahomethts [*sic*] glauben williglich und ungezwungen an nemen umb des grossen scheins willen, den sie haben ynn yhrem glauben. Darumb merck auff mein lieber Herrn und heiland Jhesum Christum, der fur deine sunde gestorben ist, nicht verleugnest noch vergessest.' Georgius de Hungaria noted in several places that, although they never forced anyone to convert to Islam, they still desired and sought after the conversion of Christians. Cf. *Tractatus*, 176, 192–194, 208, 242–244.

[46] *Heerpredigt*, WA 30/2:186.1–8 (*LTM*, 72).

believe in order to remain a Christian. This article was both foundational to the Christian faith and the doorway to salvation.

> From this article we are called Christians, and are also called through the gospel to the same, baptised, counted and accepted in Christendom, and receive through the same the Holy Spirit and forgiveness of sins in addition to the resurrection of the dead and everlasting life. For this article makes us God's children and Christ's brothers, that we become like him eternally and co-heirs.[47]

Moreover, it enabled the Christian to maintain his or her distinctiveness even amongst the background of alternative monotheistic faiths. 'And by means of this article our faith is distinct from all other faiths on earth, for the Jews do not have it, the Turks and the Saracens also do not, in addition no papist or false Christian nor other unbeliever, but only the true Christian.'[48]

This appeal to learn just the bare teachings of Christianity was fuelled by two things. First, as mentioned above, they were essential to the identity of a Christian. By learning well the Ten Commandments, Lord's Prayer, and the Creed, especially the second article, one could be assured that they would know all that was necessary of the faith and thus be able to overcome any *Anfechtung* should they be taken captive by the Turks. This was vitally important because in Turkey, Luther wrote, 'you can have no preacher or books.' External signs of Christianity were forbidden. Instead of relying on a pastor or Christian literature, they would have to 'narrate to themselves, whether it is in bed or at work, or whether it is with words or thought, your Our Father, the Faith [the Creed] and the Ten Commandments.' Luther also gave an interesting suggestion that when one recited the article on Jesus Christ rather than making the sign of the cross and risking unnecessary danger one should use a more discreet sign. 'When you use this article, press the thumb to a finger or give yourself some other kind of a sign with the hand or foot, upon which you will be sure to put into your mind and

---

[47] *Heerpredigt*, WA 30/2:186.8–14: 'Von diesem artickel heissen wir Christen und sind auch auff den selbigen durchs Euangelion beruffen, getaufft und ynn die Christenheit gezelet und angenomen, und empfahen durch den selbigen den heiligen geist und vergebung der sunden, dazu die aufferstehung von den todten und das ewige leben. Denn dieser artickel macht uns zu Gottes kinder und Christus bruder, das wir yhm ewiglich gleichund mit erben werden.'

[48] *Heerpredigt*, WA 30/2:186.15–18: 'Und durch diesen artickel wird unser glaube gesondert von allen andern glauben auff erden, Denn die Jueden haben des nicht, Die Tuercken und Sarracener auch nicht, dazu kein Papist noch falscher Christ noch kein ander ungleubiger, sondern allein die rechten Christen.'

make note of this article and particularly if you are around the scandal of the Turks or have *Anfechtung*.' And especially, he added, 'ask with the Our Father, that God will guard you from scandal and keep you pure and firm in this article for in this article lies your life and salvation.'[49]

The second reason that Luther suggested learning only the basics of Christianity was that he could not envision Germans retaining much more. Just prior to the drafting of the *Heerpredigt* he had visited various parishes throughout Saxony and found the level of lay and clerical education appalling, thus spurning the production of his catechisms of 1529. This was not just a problem amongst the laity but the clergy as well. He wrote,

> The common people, especially those who live in the country, have no knowledge whatsoever of Christian teaching, and unfortunately many pastors are quite incompetent and unfit for teaching. Although the people are supposed to be Christian, are baptized, and receive the holy sacrament, they do not know the Lord's Prayer, the Creed, or the Ten Commandments, they live as if they were pigs and irrational beasts.[50]

This evaluation of German Christianity led him to focus on the essentials of the faith, although he would add a few points that a Christian could use in response to the temptation of apostasy. For example, 'if you were to see among the Turks a great show of holiness do not permit yourself to be moved, but say: even if you were an angel you are nevertheless not Jesus Christ, Lord Jesus in you I believe alone, help me, etc.'[51]

---

[49] *Heerpredigt*, WA 30/2:186.18–24: 'Darumb, wo du ynn die Tuerckey komest, da du keine prediger noch buecher haben kanst, da erzele bey dir selbs, es sey ym bette odder ynn der erbeit, es sey mit woren odder gedancken, dein Vater unser, den Glauben und die Zehen gebot, und wenn du auff diesen artickel koempst, so drucke mit dem daumen auff einen finger odder gib dir sonst etwa ein zeichen mit der hand odder fuss, auff das du diesen artickel dir wol einbildest und mercklich machest, Und sonderlich, wo du etwa wirst ein Turckisch ergernis sehen odder anfechtung haben. Und bitte mit dem Vater unser, das dich Gotte behuete fuer ergernis und behalte dich rein und feste ynn diesem artickel, Denn an dem artickel ligt dein leben und seligkeit.'

[50] *Der kleine Katechismus*, BELK, 501: '[D]er gemeine Mann doch so garnichts weiß von der christlichen Lehre, sonderlich auf den Dörfen, und leider viel pfarrherr fast ungeschikt und untüchtig sind zu lehren, und sollen doch alle Christen heißen, getauft sein und der heiligen Sakrament genießen, können wider Vaterunser noch den Glauben oder zehen Gebot, leben dahin wie das liebe Viehe und unvernünftige Säue.'

[51] *Heerpredigt*, WA 30/2 186.31–34: 'Wo du bey den Tuercken wirst etwa sehen einen grossen schein der heiligkeit, so las dichs nicht bewegen, sondern sprich: Und wenn du ein Engel werest, so bistu dennoch nicht Jhesus Christus, Herr Jhesu an dich gleube ich alleine, hilff mir &c.'

Not surprisingly Luther based his suggestions for how a Christian should think and respond to Islam on his understanding of the person and work of Christ. The historical incarnation of the word of God was, epistemologically, the firmest foundation against intellectual problems associated with the faith and, soteriologically, it alone manifested in no uncertain terms the lengths that God went to in order to secure the salvation of human beings. In short, only a theology built upon the historical incarnation of God could survive spiritual assaults. Accordingly, Luther's christocentric theology is woven throughout his appeal for Christians to remain firm in the faith in spite of what they witnessed or heard amongst the Turks.

The first thing a Christian should think about when he witnessed the discipline of Muslims and perhaps felt betrayed by the faults of Christian clergy and monks back home, according to Luther, is to immediately recall what makes Christianity distinct and true. 'If you come across such [things], know and consider that they nevertheless know or maintain nothing of your article or of your Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, it must be false.'[52]

Interestingly, Luther refers to the second article of the Apostle's creed, as he did above in his encouragement for basic Christian education, as 'your article.' The gospel was not mere religious ideology to Luther. Rather, it was factual and existential.[53] The events wrapped up in the gospel message occurred in historical reality, but what was more, for Luther, was that the benefits—the forgiveness of sins and imputation of righteousness—were directly applied and experienced by every individual as if Christ died specifically for them. In a sermon on the Christmas following the siege of Vienna, Luther wrote,

> Therefore this is the chief article, which separates us from all the heathen, that you, O man, may not only learn that Christ, born of the virgin, is the Lord and Savior, but also accept the fact that he is your Lord and Savior, that you may be able to boast in your heart: I hear the Word that sounds from heaven and says: This child who is born of the virgin is not only his mother's son. I have more than the mother's estate; he is more mine than Mary's, for he was born for me, for the angel said, 'To you' is born the Saviour.[54]

---

[52] *Heerpredigt*, WA 30/2:187.7–10: 'Du aber, wenn dir solche fuerkomen, So wisse und gedencke, das sie dennoch nichts von deinem arickel odder von deinem Herrn Jhesu Christo wissen noch halten. Darumb so mus es falsch sein.'

[53] Beintker, *Überwindung der Anfechtung*, 82–86; McGrath, *Theology of the Cross*, 172.

[54] *Predigt am ersten Weihnachtsfeiertag nachmittags*, WA 32:266.5–10 (LW 51:215).

Luther gave every Christian possession of the gospel. Christ's person and work, as expressed in the creed, was 'their article.' So when faced by those who regarded Christ as something more or less different than the crucified and risen Saviour, as the Turks and the papists do, he simply urged them to recall their relationship with Christ, made possible by the events confessed in the creed. 'For', he continued, 'you will not find Christ in these places.'[55] Captives could also remind themselves of Christ by inventing a personal sign, and they should 'now know that the kingdom of Christ stands not in eating and drinking, and not in external behaviour, but in faith in the heart … and do not allow such deceit to cause you *Anfechten*.'[56]

Luther gave similar advice to Christians who either through curiosity or in the company of their Muslim masters found themselves impressed by the external beauty (*schönen eusserlichen*) of prayers at a mosque. If a Christian found him or herself in such circumstances, he again reminded his readers of the foundation of their faith and suggested that, in such circumstances, they use their sign to remind them of Christ.[57] Although he acknowledged that Muslim prayer was, according to his source, quite a sight to see, he nevertheless asserted that it amounted to nothing for it was performed without faith in Christ just as the fasts and other forms of piety in Islam were pointless.

The ascetic and miraculous feats performed by dervishes, even the deceased, should likewise pose no problem to the Christian. Luther suggested that the following should be thought about them: the Devil could easily perform miracles and great spiritual feats through those whom he chooses. The way to identify its origin was to see what the person performing the miracle confessed about Christ. More tellingly, Luther added, one should see if spiritual feats such as fasting and achieving trance-like states were associated with the obtaining of salvation. Since they most certainly would be, he posited, just as they were amongst certain ascetic Christian monks, then one should 'know that such Turkish saints are the Devil's saints.'[58] For Luther, Christ and the conjoin-

[55] *Heerpredigt*, WA 30/2:190.20: 'Denn du findest auch ynn diesem stuecke deinen Christum nicht.'

[56] *Heerpredigt*, WA 30/2:190.29–191.1: 'So wisse nu, das Christus reich stehet nicht ynn essen odder trincken, auch nicht ynn eusserlichen geberden, sondern ym glauben des hertzen … und las dich solch gleissen nichts anfechten.'

[57] *Heerpredigt*, WA 30/2:187.26–27.

[58] *Heerpredigt*, WA 30/2:187.12–13: 'Daruemb so wisse, das solche Tuerckische heiligen des teuffels heiligen sind.'

ing doctrine of justification by faith were the substantive principles of divine teaching and, conversely, contradictory doctrines were indicative of demonic teachings, the purpose of which was to destroy humankind's relationship with God in the spiritual estate.

Interestingly, Luther never expressed doubt over the veracity of reports of miracles performed by dervishes or in connection to the graves of deceased saints. He was, in fact, quite sure that such things had occurred. Scripture had foretold it. Citing Matthew 24:24 and 2 Thessalonians 2:9, he noted how Christ and Paul predicted that false signs and wonders would be performed by false christs and false prophets in order to lead Christians astray. And from there he offered his recommendation to those who encountered such signs:

> Therefore, be warned, if you see or hear of signs in Turkey think to yourself and speak: even if you wake all the dead and perform every sign, because you lie and blaspheme Jesus Christ or do not know him I believe you are the Devil. From my standpoint, I would prefer to remain with my weak Christ without signs and wonders, because your strong and powerful miraculous deeds will crumble.[59]

How could one be sure these were false signs and wonders? As he argued above, they were not done in the name of Christ 'but against the name of Christ, in the name of Muḥammad.'[60] The papacy was no different, he added, for they too boasted of miraculous signs and wonders, which were not accomplished in the name of Christ either.

The final subject that Luther took up was the same issue that had troubled Christian thinkers since the time of the Arab conquests only a few years after Muḥammad's death. If the Muslims were infidels why had God permitted them such success?[61] Joining the company of Christians past, Luther offered the following unphilosophical and paradoxical theodicy: it was true that the Turks were superior in many ways, but despite these appearances their true nature was diabolical.

---

[59] *Heerpredigt*, WA 30/2:189.7–13: 'Daruemb sey gewarnet, Wenn du ynn der Tuerckey zeichen sehen odder hoeren wuerdest, das du gedenckest bey dir selbs und sprechest: Und wenn du alle todten auff weckest und alle zeichen thettest, weil du da neben Jhesum Christum verleugnest und lesterst odder nicht kennen wilt, so gleube dir der teuffel an meiner stat, ich wil lieber on zeichen und wunder bey meinem schwachen Christo bleiben, denn zu dir starcken und mechtigen wundertheter fallen.'

[60] *Heerpredigt*, WA 30/2:189.16–17: 'sondern widder Christus namen, ynn des Mahomets namen.'

[61] See Tolan, *Saracens*, xiii–xv, 40–50.

> Behold among these holy appearances of the Turks lies hidden—really open—so many creepy, terrible abominations, namely, they not only lie about Christ, but also blaspheme and shame his blood, death, and resurrection and all the good that he did the world, and set their Muḥammad over him. With it they also blaspheme God the Father and honour the Devil in God's place.[62]

The Turks are really vile people, worshippers of the Devil. It was a shame that so many Christians, awestruck by the external appearances of Islam, were 'falling away and willingly giving themselves to their faith and to such an abominable, base beautiful Devil.'[63] He therefore concluded with the following advice: 'It does not rest in whether many or few men believe or do not believe, become damned or saved, but rests in what God commands or forbids, what is his word and not his word.' Appearances either in favour or in contradiction to a particular people of faith made no difference. Do not pay attention to the world. 'For God and his word remain although heaven and earth pass away. Therefore hold firm, hold firm, I say, to Christ that you be secure from such arrows and storms of the Devil and may remain one of Christ's and be saved.'[64]

Luther gave the foregoing advice to bolster the foundations of the faith of Christians so that they would remain certain of their righteousness *coram Deo* amidst 'all scandal and *Anfechtungen.*'[65] His next task was to instruct his readers in how to live like a Christian in the Ottoman Empire, that is, by living out their faith in active righteousness. He began by calling his readers to submit to God's will and word.

---

[62] *Heerpredigt*, WA 30/2:191.18–23: 'Sihe unter diesem heiligen schein der Tuercken ligen verborgen, ia unverborgen, so viel ungehewrer schrecklicher grewel, nemlich, das sie Christum nicht allein leugnen, sondern auch lestern und schenden, mit seym blut, sterben, aufferstehen und mit allem gut, das er der wellt gethan hat, und setzen yhren Mahometh uber yhn, damit sie auch Gott den Vater lestern und den teuffel an Gottes stat ehren.'

[63] *Heerpredigt*, WA 30/2:191.31–32: 'Das viel Christen abfallen und zu yhrem glauben und zu solchem grewlichen heslichem schoenen teuffel williglich sich geben.'

[64] *Heerpredigt*, WA 30/2:192.11–14: 'Es ligt nicht dran, ob viel odder wenig menschen gleuben odder nicht gleuben, verdampt odder selig werden, Sondern da ligts an, Was Gott gebotten odder verbotten hat, Was sein wort odder nicht sein wort sey'; 192.15–18: 'Denn Gott und sein wort bleiben, ob gleich hymel und erden vergehen, Daruemb hallt fest, hallt fest, sage ich, an deinem Christo, das du fuer solchen pfeilen und stuermen des teuffels sicher sein und ein Christ bleiben muegest, so wirstu selig.'

[65] *Heepredigt*, WA 30/2:192.21–22: 'Das sie ym glauben feste bleiben widder alle ergernis und anfechtungen.'

> We now also want to comfort them, that they should be patient in their captivity and endure and bear all their misery willingly for God's sake. Now, therefore, take note that where God ordains that you are captured by the Turks, carried away, and sold, that you must live according to their will and be a servant. Consider that you should patiently and willingly accept such misery and service, which is sent by God. Suffer for God's sake, and, in the truest way possible and in the most diligent way, serve your master to whom you are sold, independent of the fact that you are a Christian and your master a heathen or Turk, as if for this reason it would not be proper that you should be his servant.[66]

And by no means should one try to escape. Georgius reported the extremes that Christians went in order to get away from the Turks.

> Oh, how many have not passed the test because of their misery and threw themselves into the abyss of despair! Oh, how many escaped and risked their life, they died in the mountains and forests of hunger and thirst, or, what is even worse, they committed suicide, hanged themselves, or threw themselves into a river; and thereby they destroyed not only their bodily life, but also their soul.[67]

Whereas Georgius lamented such actions, Luther sensitively condemned them. 'In no case should you run away, as some do and think that they do right. Some drown themselves or strangle themselves in some way. No, do not let it be so, dear brother!'[68] One must keep in mind what the Scriptures say regarding servitude. Both Paul (1 Corinthians 7:20–22, Colossians 3:22) and Peter (1 Peter 2:13, 18) taught that 'slaves or servants should be nothing other than obedient, true, humble, respectful and industrious to their temporal lord … even if the lord is a non-Christian.'[69] Therefore, he continued,

> You must consider that you have lost your freedom and been placed in the state of serfdom out of which you cannot wriggle without sin and disobedience. You rob and steal thereby from your master your body, which he bought or obtained in some other way, so that it henceforth is not yours but is instead his property, as an animal or other of his possessions.[70]

---

[66] *Heerpredigt*, WA 30/2:192.22–31 (*LTM*, 72).

[67] *Tractatus*, 200, trans. Classen, 'The World of the Turks', 269–270.

[68] *Heerpredigt*, WA 30/2:192.31–33 (*LTM*, 72). Cf. *Tractatus*, 200.

[69] *Heerpredigt*, WA 30/2:193.7–9: 'Die knechte odder leibeigen sollen yhren leiblichen herrn geborsam, trew, demuetig, ehrsam und vleissig sein, nicht anders … ob gleich die herrn unchristen.'

[70] *Heerpredigt*, WA 30/2:192.33–193.5 (*LTM*, 72).

In addition to reinforcing the attitude that servitude was part of the Christian life, regardless of how difficult the circumstances, Luther offered further pastoral advice. Such suffering, in addition to being commanded, was 'good and useful for salvation' not because obedience or suffering merited it, but because it built up one's trust in God, and not human works, for salvation.[71] One should take comfort in their suffering for it was the way of life of God's people. Luther adduced several examples from the Old Testament beginning with Jacob's service to Laban through Joseph's service to Pharaoh, the captivity of the entire Jewish nation in Egypt, and then the Babylonian captivity. In spite of their misery, in the end 'even they were raised up and redeemed by God's grace and wonder.'[72] He found several examples of this in the New Testament as well, not the least Christ's submission to the Jews and the heathen rulers Pilate and Herod but also the apostles and all the martyrs in Rome. With all these examples Luther asked, 'Why would you have it better than your Lord Christ himself with all his saints in the Old and New testament?'[73] Hence, he counselled those imprisoned in Turkey to consider captivity as their cross.[74]

In a sermon preached the following year, just before the Diet of Augsburg (1530), it is clear what he meant by this. Following a Christian's justification, he noted, was their sanctification, which was often accompanied by suffering.

> Therefore we must note in the first place that Christ by his suffering not only saved us from the Devil, death, and sin, but also that his suffering is an example, which we are to follow in our suffering. Though our suffering and cross should never be so exalted that we think we can be saved by it or earn the least merit through it, nevertheless we should suffer after Christ, that we may be conformed to him. For God has appointed that we should not only believe in the crucified Christ, but also be crucified with him.

Every Christian should therefore be prepared for a life of suffering, but it should not be some sort of over spiritualised, self-induced suffering. It should be 'the kind of suffering that is worthy of the name and hon-

---

[71] *Heerpredigt*, WA 30/2:193.17–18: 'Ist dirs gut und nuetz zur seligkeit.'

[72] *Heerpredigt*, WA 30/2:194.10–11: 'Daruemb wurden sie auch erhoehet und von Gott gnedilich und wunderlich erloeset.'

[73] *Heerpredigt*, WA 30/2:194.18–20: 'Waruemb woltestu es besser haben, denn dein Herr Christus selbs mit allen seinen heiligen ym alten und newen testament?'

[74] *Heepredigt*, WA 30/2:193.18.

estly grips and hurts, such as some great danger of property, honour, body, and life', that is, 'suffering visited upon us by the Devil or the world.'

> When one knows this it is the more easy and bearable, and one can comfort oneself by saying: Very well, if I want to be a Christian, I must also wear the colours of the court; the dear Christ issues no others in his court; suffering there must be.

And when it comes, 'patiently bear and suffer it.'[75] Suffering, according to Luther, was part of the Christian life. Rather than running away one should confront it and resolvedly bear it as part of the Christian life. So, Christian captivity at the hands of the Turks, as horrific as it may be, was just one among many of the possible crosses that a Christian might have to submit to out of obedience.

In addition to the scriptural injunction to remain obedient to one's masters, whoever they may be, Luther also saw an opportunity for prisoners to act as missionaries in disguise. Obedience was part and parcel to this for 'with obstinacy and impatience you do more than aggravate your master, whose servant you have become, and thereby make his anger worse.' You also 'shame the teaching and name of Christ, as if Christians were such wicked, unfaithful, false people, who do not serve but escape and make away with themselves as scoundrels and thieves. They become harder and more stubborn in their own faith through this.' Now, he added, if you 'faithfully and diligently serve, you will adorn and praise the Gospel and the name of Christ so that your master and many others, as wicked as they might be, would have to say, "Well, surely now the Christians are a faithful, obedient, pious, humble, diligent people."' This could lead a Muslim Turk, who was already predisposed to such external appearances as signs of true religion, to consider the faith of his subjects. By remaining obedient regardless of how adverse the conditions, 'you will, furthermore, make the faith of the Turks a disgrace and perhaps convert many when they see that the Christians greatly surpass the Turks in humility, patience, industry, fidelity, and similar virtues.'[76]

This counsel is virtually unprecedented in the medieval and contemporary sixteenth-century literature addressing the relation of Christians to Muslims with one exception. Saint Francis, for whom Luther had

---

[75] *Sermon von Leiden und Kreuz*, WA 32:28.28–30.4 (LW 51:198–199).
[76] *Heepredigt*, WA 30/2:194.23–195.4 (*LTM*, 72).

no love, had, according to J. Hoeberichts' recent analysis, suggested a similar approach, although in a very different context.[77]

Before concluding the *Heepredigt* Luther assessed the nature of the Turkish threat, mincing no words. Comparing the situation of Christians in Turkey with the situation in Germany and throughout Europe, he wrote, 'For how bad can it then be to serve a Turk or heathen so long as you remain faithful and are a Christian?'[78] One should put this in perspective, he suggested, for the papists did the same things as the Turks. In fact, 'the Pope in many things is more wicked than the Turk.'[79] At least 'the Turk pressures nobody to deny Christ and discard his faith.'[80] True, the Turks may kill you thereby making you a martyr, but the pope, through his blasphemous human doctrine (*lesterliche menschen lere*) and especially his insistence that one may save himself (*eigen gerechtigkeit*), is the true murderer. He kills the soul by committing spiritual murder (*geistlich morden*). Thus, the doctrines of the papacy are no better than the 'doctrine and blasphemy of Muḥammad or the Turks' (*Mahomets odder Tuercken lere und lesterung*).[81] Regardless of whether a Christian was found living amongst Muslims or papists the situation was virtually the same. The price to be paid for being a true Christian, that is, those who stood firm on the doctrine of justification, was that 'you must risk everything with us … if you want to be a Christian with us and confess Christ.'[82] In closing, Luther summed up the situation in a few words. 'If we come to the Turks, we go to the Devil. If we remain among the pope, we go to hell.'[83] Christians are surrounded by the Devil on both sides (*teuffel auff beiden seiten*).

Luther's suggestions for Christians living amongst the Turks were not intended to provide formal apologetic arguments either against Islam or in defence of Christianity. He wrote as a pastor to theologically

[77] See J. Hoeberichts, *Francis and Islam* (Quincy: Franciscan Press, 1997), 61–134.

[78] *Heerpredigt*, WA 30/2:195.7–8: 'Denn wie boese kans denn sein, einem Tuercken odder heiden zu dienen, so fern du gleubig und ein Christ bist und bleibest?'

[79] *Heerpredigt*, WA 30/2:195.15: 'Denn der Bapst ynn dem stueck viel erger ist, denn der Tuercke.'

[80] *Heerpredigt*, WA 30/2:195.16–17: 'Der Tuercke zwinget doch niemant Christum zu verleugnen und seinem glauben.'

[81] *Heerpredigt*, WA 30/2:195.23–26.

[82] *Heerpredigt*, WA 30/2:195.14–15: 'Du alles mit uns wagen … muestest, wo du mit uns woltest ein Christ sein und Christum bekennen.'

[83] *Heerpredigt*, WA 30/2:196.33–197.1: 'Komen wir zum Tuercken, so faren wir zum teuffel, Bleiben wir unter dem Bapst, so fallen wir ynn die helle.'

ignorant laity, and his advice served a singular purpose: to ensure that Christians living in the Ottoman Empire would remain firm in the faith while, at the same time, living out their faith despite being faced with satanic or Islamic *Anfechtung*. In order to do this he instructed his readers in ways to respond, both verbal and mental, to whatever issues they might face as a captive of the Muslim Turks. In this regard, his suggestions are apologetical, and, as a whole, could be construed as an existential apologetic.

While it was subjective to an extent, at the centre of this so-called existential apologetic was the doctrine of the person and work of Christ and closely connected to it the doctrine of justification through faith in Christ. The incarnation of God in Christ and the salvation won for human beings through his death and resurrection were accomplished historical facts for Luther. They therefore provided not only a firm factual foundation upon which to rest assured of the truth of the Christian faith but also the theological criterion from which one could judge all religious claims. Moreover, these facts enshrined in the Apostle's creed by their very nature had significant existential value for those who believed that they were accomplished for them. Thus, Luther implanted in his reader's minds that the second article of the creed was 'their article.' Those who grounded themselves in Christ and the doctrine of justification would be able to ward off any bouts of *Anfechtung*, and furthermore, while his hopes for winning converts were supremely naïve, they would be well equipped to view their servitude aright and thus submit willingly to the will of their new authorities.

Although Luther's existential apologetic is a far cry from a reasoned defence of Christianity, it addressed the basic need for the times: to prepare soldiers and other potential captives to keep from falling prey to assaults from the Devil in the form of Islam. This was the best that Luther could offer for the time being, for, as he noted in his preface to Georgius de Hungaria's *Tractatus* a year later, he was not yet prepared to respond adequately to Islam and the Qur'ān. He informed his readers that he would, however, do so once he got his hands on the Qur'ān. When he finally obtained a copy of the text, he did, as promised, finally fully engage Islam at its source in his *Verlegung des Alcoran*.

CHAPTER SEVEN

LUTHER'S POLEMICAL APOLOGETIC AGAINST ISLAM

Following his initial assessment of Islam and practical suggestions for responding to Islam in 1529, the peculiarities of the Turkish Muslim world continued to stimulate Luther's interest throughout the following decade. He edited and published Georgius de Hungaria's *Tractatus de moribus, condicionibus et nequicia Turcorum* in 1530. His lectures on Genesis, which began in the mid-1530s, were filled with allusions to Turkish culture and Islamic religious beliefs. It is in fact difficult to read his theological writings from this period without finding some reference to the Turks and their religion. Since Ottoman military campaigns in Hungary had subsided, however, he saw no need to address the religion of Islam apologetically any further, that is, until the early 1540s when a new wave of military activity threatened the German Empire's border. In addition to pastoral writings urging incessant prayers, Luther set out once again to aid his readers in responding to Islam. Only this time, besides offering advice for dealing with whatever *Anfechtung* one might experience, he also sought to equip Christians with enough arguments and evidence to expose the Turks' religion as a fraudulent and diabolical lie. Rather than composing an attack on the Qur'ān from scratch, though, he opted to translate, in his opinion, the best polemical apologetic work available so that the average German could see the truth behind Islam.

The Occasion and Purpose of Luther's Verlegung des Alcoran

In 1529, from his reading of Daniel chapter 7, Luther was certain that Ottoman expansion would soon come to an end, for he was convinced that the Final Judgment was just around the corner.[1] Over a decade later, in 1542, as reports of the continued success of Turkish armies in

[1] *Heerpredigt*, WA 30/2:171.18–172.4.

Hungary reached Germany he still held fast to this conviction. In fact, he seems to have been more convinced than ever that the eschatological clock was winding down. 'God has released his last [and] final wrath', he wrote, 'that the Devil should spit up all his power and malice until he can do no more mischief. He has established several wilful and rationally conceivable lies there in the East through Muḥammad's government and here in the West through the Pope's government.'[2]

Ottoman expansion, however, was showing no sign of coming to an end and with it the extension of the domain of Islam. A year earlier Süleyman had extended his sphere of power unto the city of Buda, clearly marking its inclusion into *dār al-Islām* by converting the cathedral (Mátyás templom) into a mosque. While Luther was still convinced that Turkish expansion would eventually come to an end,[3] he was also equally certain that Süleyman sought the 'domination of Europe' and Germany was the next target on his list.[4] He responded to the threat quickly by drafting *Vermahnung zum Gebet wider den Türcken* in September 1541 wherein, as the title indicates, he urged his readers to pray against the Turks, for not only did they threaten Germany's borders, but ultimately they sought to destroy 'the authority of home, city, and church', or the three estates.[5] Meanwhile, on top of his pastoral exhortations to prayer, he began again to consider how one could respond practically to Islam. In addition to the instructions given in *Eine Heerpredigt widder den Türcken*, which was made available in several reprints during the early 1540s,[6] he offered further advice in the *Vermahnung*.

> I strongly urge that the children be taught the catechism. Should they be taken captive in the invasion, they will at least take something of the Christian faith with them. Who knows what God might be able to accomplish through them. Joseph as a seventeen-year-old youth was sold into slavery into Egypt, but he had God's word and knew what he believed. And he converted all Egypt. The same is true of Daniel and

[2] *Verlegung*, WA 53:392.19–23: 'Gott hat seinen letzten Endlichen zorn also lassen gehen, das der Teuffel all sein vermügen und bosheit hat sollen ausschütten, bis er nichts mehr noch ergers hat können thun, Nemlich, das er dort gegen Morgen durch Mahmets regiment und hie gegen abent durchs Bapsts regiment eitel wissentliche und auch der vernunfft begreiffliche Lügen gestifftet.' This twofold threat was expressed in Luther's hymn, *Erhalt uns Herr*, likewise written in the 1540s. The first stanza reads, 'Erhalt uns Herr bey deinem wort und steur des Bapsts und Türcken Mord die Jhesum Christum deinen Son Wolten stürtzen von deinem Thron' (WA 35:467, no. 32).

[3] WA Br 10:24.36–38.

[4] WA Br 9:621–622 (LW 50:228–229).

[5] *Vermahnung*, WA 51:621.21–22 (LW 43:239). See chapter 5 above.

[6] See WA 30/2:152–153.

> his companions. Should the women be led away captive and forced to share bed and board with Turkish men, I would counsel them to submit in patience and endure this suffering for Christ's sake. But they need not despair as though they were damned. The soul is not responsible for that which the enemy may do to the body. Those in captivity are simply in captivity.[7]

His advice remained simple. He urged his readers to stand firm in their Christian faith, to consider it true and Islam false no matter what the circumstance while, at the same time, remaining dutiful servants of their Turkish captors.

Luther was convinced that if a Christian was just educated in the basic tenets of the faith they would find the religion of the Turks repulsive. Likewise, in order to ensure Christians would not 'deny their Christ and follow Muḥammad', in his preface to Georgius de Hungaria's description of life in Turkey, he wrote that all they needed to do was 'to learn that the religion of Christ is something other than ceremonies and customs and that faith in Christ has absolutely nothing to do with discerning what ceremonies, customs, or laws are better or worse.' The most effective defence against the allure of Islam was simply to obtain a firm conviction in the Christian doctrines of the person and work of Christ.

> These defences are the articles about Christ, namely, that Christ is the son of God, that he died for our sins, that he was raised for our life, that justified by faith in him our sins are forgiven and we are saved, etc. These are the thunder that destroys not only Muḥammad but even the gates of hell. For Muḥammad denies that Christ is the son of God, denies that he died for our sins, denies that he arose for our life, denies that by faith in him our sins are forgiven and we are justified, denies that he will come as judge of the living and the dead (though he does believe in the resurrection of the dead and the day of judgment), denies the Holy Spirit, and denies the gifts of the Spirit. By these and similar articles of faith consciences must be fortified against the ceremonies of Muḥammad.[8]

Such advice was indicative of Luther's early approach towards Islam. Yet, he hoped some day to offer a more comprehensive response to the religion of the Turks. As he also expressed in 1530, 'I will say more if ever I get my hands on that Muḥammad and his Qur'ān.'[9]

---

[7] *Vermahnung*, WA 51:621.22–32 (LW 43:239).
[8] *Vorwort*, WA 30/2:207.24–208.4 (H-B, 260).
[9] *Vorwort*, WA 30/2:208.14–15 (H-B, 262).

The occasion for a more informed and comprehensive response presented itself sometime in late 1541 or early 1542. While emotions were running high in anticipation of another attack on Vienna, the University of Wittenberg's library obtained a manuscript of the Qur'ān (in Latin translation) whereupon Luther was, for the first time, able to read it in its entirety. In a letter dated just a few days afterwards he expressed to his friend Jakob Propst (1486–1562) that God's anger must be burning against the Turks, for, as was clear from his reading of the Qur'ān, their religion was utterly despicable and blasphemous. Thus, along with his conviction that the world was coming to an end, he was sure that God would soon defeat the 'beastly' religion of Islam.[10] But to provide ammunition for the battle—at least the battle of ideas—he informed his confidant that he had begun translating the *Confutatio Alcorani* of Brother Richard (Riccoldo da Monte di Croce) so that, he wrote in another letter on the same day, he could 'portray Muḥammad [and his faith] in a little German.'[11]

According to Luther, the primary purpose behind the translation, which he entitled *Verlegung des Alcoran*,[12] was apologetical.

> What I have written, I do for this reason: Whether this little book arrives through print or preachers struggling against the Turks, [I write] that those who are now or in the future under the Turks might protect themselves against Muḥammad's faith, even if they are not able to protect themselves against his sword, particularly those who at least hope for salvation after this life.[13]

---

[10] WA Br 10:24.36–38.

[11] WA Br 10:20.60–63: 'Und bitte, E.k.f.g. wolten mirs gnediglich zu gut halten, solch verzogen antwort, Denn ich itzt ynn einer Erbeit stecke, den Mahmet deudsch ein wenig zu malen, das ich dafur nicht viel dencken noch sorgen kan auff ettwas anders.' As he reported in his preface to the finished project, his reading of the Qur'ān confirmed in his mind that Riccoldo had not invented lies, as he first thought, but faithfully reported and contended with the facts about the religion of Islam (*Verlegung*, WA 53:272.17–19).

[12] The term 'Verlegung' is roughly equivalent to the modern German 'Widerlegung' ('Refutation'), although it should be noted that Luther used both 'widerlegung' and 'verlegung' in one document, in each case referring to polemical works against the Qur'ān (see WA Br 10:161.9, 162.64). This seems to indicate that they each carried their own subtle nuances. Both undoubtedly mean 'Refutation', however, 'Verlegung', which can also be translated 'publication', seems to imply a 'Refutation that exposes something.'

[13] *Verlegung*, WA 53:392:30–35: 'Aber was ich hierin schreibe, thue ich darumb, Ob dis Büchlin möchte durch den druck oder durch die prediger fur die komen, so wider den Türcken streiten oder bereit unter dem Türcken sein müssen oder nach komen müsen, das sie doch sich des Mahmets Glauben erweren mügen, Wo sie ja nicht sich

As it is expressed in the letter cited above and will be demonstrated below, he thought that the best approach was first and foremost to expose the errors and absurdities of the Islamic religion. In doing so, he was convinced that Christians, especially those who might be suffering from doubts over the veracity of their own faith or who were experiencing temptation amongst the Turks, would find their religious convictions strengthened. 'For the sake of utility and necessity', he wrote, 'I saw to it to translate this little book into German (for one has none better) so that even we Germans will know what a shameful faith the faith of Muḥammad is [and] that we will be strengthened in our Christian faith.'[14]

This would also encourage Christians to remain firm in their faith although it might seem that God approved of the Turks' religion since it appeared that he was granting them militarily and material success.

> Even though we were not able to convert the Saracens or now the Turks, still we remain firm and strong in our faith. And it should not move us that the Saracens and Turks have been, for so many hundred years, victorious and prosperous against Christians, while we have endured much poverty on account of them, so much so that they have become the lord of the world.[15]

The manifest success of the Ottomans did not mean that 'the faith of Muḥammad is right and our faith is false as the blind Turks boast.'[16] On the contrary, Luther explained, this was simply how God ruled his people.[17] He permitted heathen nations to rise up so that, through them, he might discipline his people. Given the pitiful state of Christianity in Europe it should come as no surprise to see the Turks prevailing over Christendom, he wrote, for 'Christians certainly have earned such punishment since they divide themselves with heresy and the

---

seines Schwerts erwehren kündten, Sonderlich die, so dennoch gern auch nach diesem leben Selig werden wolten.'

[14] *Verlegung*, WA 53:273.30–274.1: 'Darumb ichs fur nuetzlich und not angesehen, dieses Buechlin zuverdeudschen (weil man kein bessers hat), Das doch bey uns deudschen auch erkand werde, wie ein schendlicher Glaube des Mahmets Glaube ist, Da mit wir gesterckt werden in unserm Christlichen Glauben.'

[15] *Verlegung*, WA 53:274.7–11: 'Wo wir nicht konnen die Sarracener und nu mehr die Tuercken bekeren, doch das wir widerumb auch fest und starck bleiben in unserm Glauben, Und uns nicht bewegen lassen, das die Sarracenen und Tuercken so viel hundert jar eitel sieg und glueck wider die Christen, wir aber viel ungluecks wider sie gehabt, bis sie der Welt Herrn worden.'

[16] *Verlegung*, WA 53:274.13–14: 'Des Mahmets glaube recht und unser Glaube unrecht sey, wie die blinden Tuercken pochen.'

[17] *Verlegung*, WA 53:274.14: 'Sondern das ist Gottes weise, sein Volck zuregiren.'

amassing of many new doctrines in addition to … ingratitude and scorn for the precious blood of Christ.'[18]

Accompanying the apologetic task, Luther also considered the possibility of proselytising Muslims. Although he confessed that the chances were slim, he still asked how they could be led to the truth since they regarded the Qur'ān as their sole authority in religion. The resolution to this problem was the *Verlegung* itself: by attacking the foundation of Islam, he hoped to show the superiority of the Gospel so that those 'led astray by this law [the Qur'ān] might return back to God.'[19] While the exposure of the deficiencies of the Qur'ān was intended primarily for the benefit of his Christian readers, as will be seen below, the *Verlegung* also suggested ways to defend and promote the Christian faith in an Islamic context.

Luther's Attack on the Qur'ān

There are several interesting aspects to Luther's *Verlegung* that have already received the attention of scholars. For example, the nature of the translation itself is the subject of a few older, cursory studies which address the Reformer's interest in Islam.[20] More recently, Hartmut Bobzin has contributed several indispensible investigations ranging from a study of the transmission of its Qur'ānic citations from Latin into German to its place in the history of European polemics against Islam.[21] And, most recently, in volume 6 of the Corpus Islamo-Christianum, as well as providing the original Latin alongside Luther's German, Johannes Ehmann has supplied an informative paragraph-by-paragraph commentary on the text.[22] What has not been sufficiently addressed, however, is Luther's adaptation of the presupposi-

[18] *Verlegung*, WA 53:274.32–34: 'Christen haben solche straffe wol verdienet, da sie sich trenneten mit Ketzerey und Rotten viel newer lere, Und dazu … in undanckbarkeit und verachtung des theuren bluts Christi.'

[19] *Verlegung*, WA 53:278.22: '… durch dis Gesetz verfüret, möchten wider zu Gott bekeren.'

[20] Barge, 'Luthers Stellung', 115–119; Beltz, 'Luthers Verständnis', 87–89. Also see the introductory comments in WA 53:267–269.

[21] Bobzin, *Der Koran*, 95–141; '"A Treasury of Heresies"', 167–172.

[22] Text of *CA* and *Verlegung des Alcoran* in parallel columns at CISC 6:26–189 and commentary at 191–322. While the CISC edition has been consulted to help identify Luther's textual alterations and additions, references are given only to the Weimar edition.

tions, methodology, and arguments of this medieval scholastic polemic into his own apologetic repertoire.

The question of whether or not the *Verlegung*, a translated text, constitutes a proper source for gaining insight into Luther's response to Islam is perhaps raised here. Apart from the fact that it is an 'extremely free translation',[23] a comparison of the German text with the manuscript from which he worked shows that 'his use of the Latin text is rather arbitrary; he shortened some passages which seemed to him too much inspired by scholastical theology and added other passages to stress some important matters.'[24] Moreover, not only are there traces of Luther's own theological impulses, but also his additions to and subtractions from the original text make it apparent that he assimilated the method and argumentation of the *Confutatio* into his own approach towards Islam while, at the same time, modifying it in order to form an apologetic suitable for his German readers. In order to elucidate his response to Islam a description of the overall contour and strands of the arguments put forward in the *Verlegung* is therefore warranted and necessary.

The first chapter of the *Verlegung* purports to summarise the main points of Qurʾānic doctrine in order to give its readers an overview of what the Qurʾān teaches. Not surprisingly, it begins with the rejection of the Trinity and then moves into Qurʾānic Christology, noting every aspect in detail from Christ's denial that he ever ascribed a divine nature to himself to the highly contentious passage in sūra 4:157, from a Christian point of view, that he was never crucified, but instead taken up into heaven. Then, following on, other miscellaneous Qurʾānic teachings are briefly recounted, from stories of the *jinn* being converted after hearing the recitation of the Qurʾān to Qurʾānic descriptions of paradise. From the points that are summarised, though, it is clear that this was not really a summary of the 'main points' of the Qurʾān but rather it was intended to be a summary of the main points of contention between Christian and Islamic doctrine. This then raised the question of how Christians ought to respond.

The particular methodology used to approach Islam in the *Verlegung* is rooted in the Dominican scholastic apologetic tradition. Thomas Aquinas (c. 1225–1274), the greatest of the Dominican theologians,

[23] Edwards, *Last Battles*, 107; cf. Barge, 'Luthers Stellung', 116, Bobzin, *Der Koran*, 95–97.

[24] Bobzin, '"A Treasury of Heresies"', 167.

established the skeleton of this 'system' of apologetics in his *De rationibus fidei contra Saracenos*, which he composed shortly after his great *Summa contra gentiles* in 1264. In a brief chapter entitled 'How to argue with unbelievers' he summarised the underlying principles of his approach.

> In disputations with unbelievers about articles of the faith, you should not try to prove the faith by necessary reasons. This would belittle the sublimity of faith …. Yet whatever comes from the Supreme Truth cannot be false, and what is not false cannot be repudiated by any necessary reason …. So any Christian disputing about the articles of the faith should not try to prove the faith, but defend the faith. Thus blessed Peter [1 Peter 3:15] did not say: 'Always have your proof', but 'your answer ready,' so that reason can show that what the catholic faith holds is not false.[25]

According to Thomas, the doctrines of Christianity, which are believed 'only because they are revealed by God',[26] could not be demonstrated on the grounds of pure reason, but they could be shown to be consistent with it. Thus, his response to Muslim objections to the Christian faith was primarily concerned with showing how doctrines such as the Trinity and deity of Christ cohered with human reason.[27]

Thomas's assumption that the content of revelation, although not demonstrable, was capable of being supported and even confirmed by rational argumentation was shared by Riccoldo, but whereas the former set out to answer Muslim objections the latter's aim was to raise objections against the Muslim theology. In both cases, the basic presumption was that, according to John Tolan, 'reason can be used to destroy rival creeds and defend one's own doctrines from the charge of irrationality but not to prove the truth of Christianity.'[28]

Luther was, by comparison, not so confident in reason's ability to demonstrate a logical coherence to doctrines such as the two natures in Christ and the tri-unity of God. The high articles of the Christian creed were not irrational, according to Luther, but instead were outside the bounds of human rationality.[29] While his translation of Riccoldo

---

[25] Thomas Aquinas, *De Rationibus Fidei contra Saracenos, Graecos et Armenos ad Cantorem Antiochenum: Reasons for the Faith against the Muslims (and One Objection of the Greeks and Armenians) to the Cantor of Antioch*, trans. Joseph Kenney, *Islamochristiana* 22 (1996), 2.

[26] Thomas, *De Rationibus Fidei*, 2.

[27] For a fuller discussion of Thomas' approach to apologetics, see Bernard Ramm, *Varieties of Christian Apologetics: An Introduction to the Christian Philosophy of Religion* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1961), 89–105.

[28] Tolan, *Saracens*, 244–245.

[29] Lohse, 'Reason and Revelation in Luther', *SJT* 13 (1960), 337–365.

omitted passages that would have been conceived by him as a misuse of reason,[30] he still followed the basic Dominican method of exposing and destroying error first before expounding truth.[31] He thus put forward that, because Muslims firmly believe the Qur'ān is God's word, one should begin by attacking it. 'One must not deal with them at first by [asserting and defending] the high articles of our faith … but take this way and manner, namely, take and diligently work with their Qur'ān, demonstrating their law to be false and useless.'[32] After this is accomplished, then one could begin to expound the Christian faith and in effect replace error with truth. Oddly enough, as will be shown below, the *Verlegung* based its exposition of Christian dogma primarily on the Qur'ān itself. In any case, the proper starting point in Christian-Muslim theological dialogue, according to Luther, was to first destroy the foundation of the Muslim faith by exposing its errors. This would clear away any obstacles to the Christian faith and thereby make way for the comprehension of the gospel.

Following the prescribed methodology, the *Verlegung* attempted to prove that the Qur'ān 'cannot be God's law' for the following reasons: 'neither the Old or New Testament bear witness to it, it does not [agree] in speech or doctrine with any other [authority], it contradicts itself, it is not confirmed by miraculous signs, it is contrary to reason, there are manifest lies within it, it promotes murder, it is disorderly, it is shameful, [and] it is untrustworthy.'[33] Each of these allegations are put forward and supported by evidence from the Qur'ān and other Islamic sources in ten successive arguments.

The first argument alleged that there was no evidence vindicating Muḥammad's prophethood. It began by asserting that 'concern-

[30] The passages that Luther found to be overly confident in reasons ability to show the rationality of Christian dogma and therefore omitted are most easily seen in Ehmann's edition of the *Confutatio Alcorani* and *Verlegung des Alcoran*. See especially CISC 6:46, 110, 158, 160–162.

[31] See Tolan, *Saracens*, 234–254.

[32] *Verlegung*, WA 53:284.29–32: 'Mus man nicht zu erst mit jnen von unsers Glaubens hohen artickeln handeln. … Sondern diesen weg ung weise furnemen, Nemlich von jrem Alkoran handeln und vleis thun, das man solch jr Gesetz falsch und nichtig beweise.'

[33] *Verlegung*, WA 53:378.16–20: 'Der Alcoran nicht kan Gottes Gesetz sein, Darumb das weder alt noch new Testament davon zeugen, Das weder mit reden noch Lere mit andern stimmet, das jm selbs widerwertig ist, Das mit keinem Wunderzeichen bestetigt ist, Das wider vernunfft, Das oeffentliche Luegen drinnen sind, Das Moerdisch ist, Das unoerdig, Das schedlich, Das ungewis ist.'

ing Muḥammad there is no evidence either in the Old or New Testament, but he himself and only he testifies on behalf of himself.' Based on the assumption that God's revelation in history was like a chain whereby the prophets formed a continuous linkage by foretelling the ministry of future prophets all culminating in the incarnation, Luther drew the immediate conclusion that since the Scriptures did not foretell Muḥammad's arrival and he did not perform any miracles to support his claims, 'He cannot be from God' and his claim to be a prophet—'the prophet of the world'—was therefore a lie.[34]

Anticipating that a Muslim's response to this would be that he actually was foretold in both the Testaments but Jews and Christians had excised these prophecies from the text such that only what is contained in the Qur'ān is now reliable,[35] the *Verlegung* shifted into a defence of the veracity of the Bible against the charge of textual corruption (*taḥrīf al-lafẓ*).[36] After citing Qur'ān 10:94, where Muḥammad related, 'if you doubt that which we revealed to you, ask those who have read the book (the Bible) before you',[37] it then asked, 'Now if the books of the Bible are corrupted why does he point his Saracens to false books?'[38] This demonstrated, along with other passages such as sūra 15:9 and 5:43, that Muslims were unjustified in their belief that the Bible was corrupt, for according to Luther the Qur'ān clearly maintained the authority of the Gospel (*Injīl*) and Torah (*Tawrā*). In addition, further questions could be raised against the charge of *taḥrīf*.

> Why would the Christians have removed the name of Muḥammad, who praises Christ and his mother, even the gospel, from the Gospel? For he says in the Qur'ān [5:46]: 'in the Gospel of Christ is the truth and perfection.' They [the Christians] would have rather removed the names: Pilate, Herod, Judas, Caiphas, etc.[39]

---

[34] *Verlegung*, WA 53:286:21–24: 'Von Mahmet ist kein zeugnis, weder im alten noch newen Testament, Sondern er selbs und allein zeuget von sich selbs, on wunderzeichen und on schrifft, darumb kan er von Gott nicht sein, und leuget, da er sich rhümet, Er sey der gantzen Welt Prophet.'

[35] See Q 61:6; *Verlegung*, WA 53:286.29–31.

[36] While the charge of textual corruption (*taḥrīf al-lafẓ*) was known to Luther, he was, for the most part, unaware of the allegation of distorting the meaning of the text (*taḥrīf al-maʿnā*). On *taḥrīf*, see *EI*^{2} 10:111–112; Saeed, 'The Charge of Distortion', 419–436.

[37] *Verlegung*, WA 53:286.33–288.1: 'Wo jr zweivelt an dem, das Wir euch jtzt offenbaren, so fraget die drümb, die ehe denn jr das Buch (die Biblia) gelesen haben.'

[38] *Verlegung*, WA 53:288.1–2: 'Sind nu die Buecher der Biblia verfelscht, warumb weiset er seine Sarracener zu falschen Buechern?'

[39] *Verlegung*, WA 53:290.6–10: 'Jtem, warumb solten die Christen den namen Mahmet aus dem Euangelio zuvor getilget haben, der doch Christum und seine mutter,

Also,

> How is it that the Christians patched into the Gospel how Christ was crucified and died (as Muḥammad lies)? It would have been much better and easier for the world to believe had they preached that Christ was not crucified or died (as Muḥammad did), particularly because it is foolish and impossible according to all reason to believe that the one true God should have died.[40]

Such questions all pointed to the reliability of the biblical text, and thus, after citing Qurʾān 5:68, 'hold the Gospel and Law of Moses, alongside the Qurʾān',[41] the argument concluded asking why Muslims would be admonished by Muḥammad to hold allegedly corrupt books to be authoritative if they actually were not. The onus of proof was therefore shifted to the accuser: because the Qurʾān regards the Bible as authoritative but Muslims claim that it has been corrupted (based on passages from the Qurʾān), to vindicate their claim, they needed to produce at least one copy of the original uncorrupted text and compare it to a corrupted text from or shortly after the time of Muḥammad. This should be very easy to do since it was unconceivable for every single uncorrupted copy of the Bible to have been lost such that only corrupted versions existed.

With the Bible vindicated, the second charge raised to undermine the Qurʾān was that it contradicted the manner in which God had previously revealed himself. The argument began by drawing attention to the rhythmic nature of the Arabic text. Although Luther had no knowledge of Arabic, he trusted Riccoldo and argued that such a manner of expression not only militates against the holy Scriptures but also all philosophical and legal texts. Rhymes were only fitting for entertainers or jesters but certainly not for preaching, teaching, or explicating legal matters. Luther even confidently added, 'never has

---

auch das Euangelium lobet. Denn so spricht er im Alcoran: "im Euangelio Christi ist die warheit und volkomenheit." Viel mehr hetten sie moegen austilgen die namen: Pilati, Herodis, Jude, Caiphe etc.'

[40] *Verlegung*, WA 53:290.11–16: 'Jtem wie reimet sichs, das die Christen solten in das Euangelium geflickt haben, wie Christus gecreutzigt und gestorben sey (als Mahmet leuget), So es den Christen gar viel besser were gewest, und der welt leichtlicher zu gleuben, das sie Christum nicht gecreutzigt noch gestorben hetten gepredigt (wie der Mahmet thut), Sonderlich weil es nerrisch und aller vernunfft unmueglich zu gleuben, das der solt sterben, der ein rechter Gott ist.'

[41] *Verlegung*, WA 53:292.10–11: 'So müssen sie nu halten das Euangelium und Gesetz Mose, neben dem Alcoran.'

a prophet, lawyer, or philosopher spoken in a poetical or rhythmical nature.'[42]

A second charge that the Qur'ān's mode of expression contradicted God's former revelation was, ironically enough, based on its 'excessive' praise of God. The argument began with the claim that hardly a chapter passed where one does not read that God was great, high, wise, good, and just; that he was the only one who was worthy to be praised; and that there was no one like him. Although all these things were true, Luther responded, adding to the text, that this was not the way God spoke of himself in the past. Instead, when he spoke through the prophets he did so in the following manner: 'I am your God, I have made everything, everything is mine, I am gracious, etc.' This addition was prompted by Luther's conviction that God was more than an abstract distant reality, which was, he thought, how the Qur'ān depicted him.[43] Instead God was, for Luther, a very personal God. Thus he closed this brief argument, again adding to the text, asserting that in the Qur'ān God does not speak as if he is 'your God', but instead it is as if he does not even exist.[44]

The third problem with the Qur'ān's mode of expression *vis-à-vis* previous revelations was its undignified description of sexual intercourse. With characteristic verbosity, Luther began by claiming that concerning the matter of sex the Qur'ān expressed itself similar to the way 'whores and scamps' speak 'in whorehouses …. The Holy Spirit, however, speaks very chastely concerning this in the Scriptures. For example, Adam knew his wife Eve, David went into Bathsheba, Elizabeth was with child, etc.'[45] Even the philosophers spoke about such things decently, he added. 'But Muḥammad was so deeply immersed in shameful behaviour that he very openly [and] gladly spoke of such wretched desires.'[46] Luther seems to have forgotten about instances in the Bible where shameful sexual acts did take place such as Lot's incest

---

[42] *Verlegung*, WA 53:292.34–294.1: 'Denn nie kein Prophet, Rechtlerer oder Philosophus hat Poetisch oder reim weise geredt.'

[43] See, however, Q 50:16.

[44] *Verlegung*, WA 53:294.20–21: 'Nicht also auff Alcoranisch: Gott ist dein Gott, als redet er von einem andern, das er nicht were.'

[45] *Verlegung*, WA 53:294.23–25: '… wie die Huren und Buben im hurhause … Aber der heilige Geist gar züchtig in der Schrifft davon redet. Als: Adam erkandte sein weib Heva. Jtem: David gieng hinein zu BethSaba. Jtem: Elisabeth ward schwanger, etc.'

[46] *Verlegung*, WA 53:294.29–296.1: 'Aber Mahmet war so tieff in der unzucht ersoffen, das er oeffentlich gern von solcher elenden notturft oder boeser suendlicher lust schendlich redet.'

in Genesis 19:30–38, but what is especially imbalanced about this argument is that it does not refer to a single passage of the Qur'ān to justify its allegations.

Nevertheless, the argument that the Qur'ān contradicted divine revelation continued by purporting that it was filled with obvious fables and fairy tales. Abridged translations of Qur'ān 27:17–24 (the story of Solomon and the ants),[47] 54:1 and its accompanying tradition (the splitting of the moon),[48] 34:14 (the worm gnawing at Solomon's staff), and a tradition from a work known as *Doctrina Machumet* (on the origin of the prohibition of wine),[49] are all used to demonstrate that 'such a law cannot be divine for even nature teaches that if there was no Bible the true God would not speak to men through such fables.'[50]

Shifting from a comparison of the Qur'ān's mode of expression to the Bible, the next argument asserted that the Qur'ān not only contradicted the Bible, but also itself. Beginning with a paraphrase of sūra 4:82, 'If the Qur'ān was not from God, many contradictions would be found within it',[51] the *Verlegung* simply pitted excerpts of the Qur'ān against each other. For example, sūra 2:62, 'Jews, Christians, and Sabians will be saved',[52] was juxtaposed with sūra 3:19, 'Nobody can be saved except those who live according to the law of the Saracens.'[53] Furthermore, when the Qur'ān instructs Muslims to treat those from other sects gently and kindly it is contradicted by passages where Muḥammad commands Muslims to rob and kill unbelievers until they believe or pay tribute.[54]

These two examples, however, did not compare to the striking nature of the following one: 'in the chapter of the cow, that is, the bull, he allows that it is not against nature to mingle with boys or women ….

---

[47] For Luther's misrepresentation of this passage, see Bobzin, '"A Treasury of Heresies"', 169–172.

[48] Riccoldo derived this from *Ld*, 9.11. The splitting of the moon is found in abundance in Muslim traditions. See Burman, ed., *Ld*, 321n2.

[49] See Mérigoux, ed., *ClS*, 79n23.

[50] *Verlegung*, WA 53:298.21–23: '… das solch gesetz nicht Goettlich sein kan, Denn auch die Natur leret, wenn schon kein Biblia were, das der rechte Gott nicht durch solche fabeln mit Menschen reden wuerde.'

[51] *Verlegung*, WA 53:302.3–5: 'Wenn der Alcoran nicht von Gott were, so würde sich viel widerwertiges drinnen finden.'

[52] *Verlegung*, WA 53:302.17: 'Jüden, Christen und Sabei, selig werden.'

[53] *Verlegung*, WA 53:302.18–19: 'Niemand selig werde, on die, so nach dem Gesetz der Sarracener leben.'

[54] See Q 9:29, 16:25, 29:46.

[Then] he says in the same chapter that the sodomites at the time of Lot committed abominable sins.'[55] While this certainly would have shocked Luther, what should have surprised him more, if he had verified this with his manuscript of the Qur'ān, was that the former passage was a 'complete fabrication.'[56] Nevertheless, these inconsistencies were more than enough to Luther's mind and, more importantly, his less informed readers to prove that the Qur'ān was riddled with internal inconsistencies, and was, therefore, in accordance to its own standards, not from God.

Shifting slightly from the premise of the former arguments, the fourth attack on the divine nature of the Qur'ānic message questioned the legitimacy of the message bearer by taking issue with the prophethood of Muḥammad on the grounds that he failed to perform miracles to verify his status as a prophet of God. 'Just as Moses was sent to Pharoah he performed great wonders, and all the prophets, Elijah, Elisha, and others. So too a new [prophet] should perform them. Indeed Christ came with great signs, as Muḥammad himself acknowledges everywhere in the Qur'ān. However, [Muḥammad] performed no signs at anytime therefore his law cannot be from God neither can he be a messenger of God.'[57] The basic presupposition here, which Luther expressed elsewhere when dealing with claims of extra-biblical revelation, was that revelation is most aptly verified true when accompanied by signs and wonders. Anticipating a rebuttal, the argument continued, claiming that Muslims would dispute this by saying that Muḥammad did, in fact, perform many miracles. For example, they said that he brought together a divided moon and produced water from his fingertips. Such examples, however, were 'fables and even contrary to the Qur'ān itself.'[58]

---

[55] *Verlegung*, WA 53:304.9–14: 'Im Capitel Bouis, das ist Ochse, lests er zu, Es sey nicht wider die Natur, sich mit Knaben und Weibern vermengen … Spricht er im selben Capitel, Das die Sodomien zur zeit Lots eine grewliche sünde gethan haben.'

[56] See Burman, ed., *Ld*, 343n1; Mérigoux, ed., *ClS*, 84n17. On this common charge against Islam by medieval apologists, see Daniel, *Islam*, 142–143.

[57] *Verlegung*, WA 53:306.24–308.2: 'Da Moses gesand ward zu Pharao, thet er grosse wunder, Und alle Propheten, Elias, Eliseus, Und sonderlich, so ein Newes solten auffbringen. So ist ja Christus mit grossen zeichen komen, wie Mahmet selbs das alles bekennet im Alcoran, Er aber kein zeichen jemals gethan, drumb kan sein Gesetz nicht von Gott, und er kein Apostel Gottes sein.'

[58] *Verlegung*, WA 53:308.5–6: 'Das sind Fabulen, und auch wider den Alcoran selbs.' Muḥammad's alleged miracles are located in the ḥadith collections. See, for example, Al-Bukhārī, Muḥammad ibn Ismā'īl, *The Translation of the Meanings of Saḥiḥ al-Bukhārī*

> Muḥammad often says in the Qur'ān how the people had said to him: 'show us a sign as Moses came with signs and as Christ and other prophets have performed.' Thereupon he responded: 'Moses and the prophets were sent by God, particularly Christ, coming with great signs. The world did not believe them, but called them magicians and practitioners of black arts. Therefore God has not permitted me to perform any signs, because they did not believe, but [instead] I have come with force of arms.'[59]

Next to conformity with previous revelations, miracles were the surest way to confirm the claims of a prophet. Muḥammad self-admittedly failed to offer any.

Christianity, on the other hand, was firmly supported and confirmed by miracles.

> Our Christian faith, which requires one to believe and perform difficult things is established with verifiable and useful miraculous signs, which not only Christ but also the apostles and thereafter the fathers performed. And still it happens today that demons are exorcised, the sick are healed, [and] dead are raised. Such wonders Christians perform, who believe and confess that Jesus Christ the crucified one is the true and only God.[60]

Noting that Saracens would certainly deny such phenomena, the *Verlegung* argued that Christianity's successful growth in a hostile environment under the pagan Roman Empire demonstrated that such supernatural events did, in fact, occur. It would have been a miracle unto itself if Christianity survived without miracles and only through the preaching of a few simple, uneducated people. Also, that Christians under the persecution of the Romans remained firm in their faith was

---

(Arabic-English), trans. Muḥammad Khan (Riyadh: Darussalam Publishers, 1997), 4:472 (no. 3579), 4:501–502 (no. 3637).

[59] *Verlegung*, WA 53:308.16–22: 'Und er Mahmet, im Alcoran offt spricht, wie die Leute zu jm gesagt haben: "zeige doch ein Wunder, wie Moses mit zeichen kam und wie Christus und andere Propheten gethan haben", darauff er antwortet: "Moses und die Propheten sind von Gotte gesand, Sonderlich Christus, der mit grossen zeichen kam, Aber die welt gleubte jnen nicht, Sondern hies sie Zeuberer und schwartzkuenstler Darumb hat mich Gott kein zeichen thun lassen, Denn sie hetten doch nicht gegleubt, Sondern bin komen mit gewalt der woffen."' Cf. Q 6:7, 28:48, 34:43.

[60] *Verlegung*, WA 53:312.5–11: 'Aber unser Christlicher glaube, der doch schwere ding fordert, zu Gleuben und zu thun, ist mit oeffentlichen und nuetzlichen Wunderzeichen gegruendet, die nicht allein Christus, sondern auch die Apostel und hernach die Veter gethan, Und weren noch heutigs tags, das die Teuffel ausgetrieben, krancken gesund werden, todten aufferstehen. Solche wunder thun die Christen, die doch gleuben und bekennen, das Jhesus Christus der gecreutzigte sey warhafftiger und der einige Gott.'

further evidence that such miracles did happen, for those persecuted would have certainly abandoned their faith had they not been compelled to believe on the basis of the overwhelming evidence of miracles. In conclusion, Luther asserted that 'the Muḥammadan faith is without one miracle' and therefore without adequate evidential grounds for its claims.[61]

The fifth argument against the Qur'ān began with the supposition that, in addition to confirmation by miracles, a religion might prove to be legitimate if it was rational. 'It certainly could have happened that Muḥammad's law was accepted by the world even without miracles if it conformed to reason.'[62] Even this was not the case, though, argued Luther, for it is entirely irrational. He thus altered Riccoldo's plain, sober title—'How the law of Muḥammad is irrational'—to 'How the Qur'ān of Muḥammad is beastly and swinish.'[63] This lengthy chapter henceforth portrayed Muḥammad and the teachings of the Qur'ān in the worst possible light.

Muḥammad's character was the first target. 'It does not conform with reason that such a bad man, a murderer, robber, adulterer, and one who was subject to other wickedness should establish such a holy (as they call it) law.'[64] While examples of vices from other prophets could be cited, such as the adultery of David and murder committed by Moses, the difference between them and Muḥammad was clear. David and Moses repented of their sin whereas Muḥammad never even confessed them. Rather, he justified his sin 'through his wicked, shameful law.'[65]

Two examples of this were offered in the *Verlegung*.[66] The first is the story of a Coptic slave girl named Māriya who was given to Muḥam-

---

[61] Interestingly, there is no explicit mention of the miracle of the inimitability of the Qur'ān.

[62] *Verlegung*, WA 53:312.35–37: 'Es kuend wol geschehen sein, das Mahmets gesetz von der welt were angenomen auch on Wunderzeichen, wo es doch der vernunfft gemes were.'

[63] *CA*, WA 53:311.9: 'Quod lex Mahometi irrationalis est'; *Verlegung*, WA 53:312.33: 'Wie der Alcoran Mahmet viehisch und Sewisch ist.'

[64] *Verlegung*, WA 53:314.1–3: 'Erstlich ists der vernunfft nicht gemes, das ein solcher boeser Mensch, ein Moerder, Reuber, Ehebrecher und andern lastern unterworffen, solt ein heilig (wie sie es nennen) Gesetz stellen, wie das alles offenbar ist, die sein leben wissen.'

[65] *Verlegung*, WA 53:314.13: '… durch sein lesterlich schendlich Gesetze.'

[66] Both were derived from chapter 7 of *Liber Denudationis*. See Mérigoux, ed., *ClS*, 91n9–10, 92n14–15; cf. *Ld*, 7.1–7, 8–10 along with Burman's notes.

mad by the Egyptian king Al-Muqawqis and with whom Muḥammad was caught having intercourse. When his two wives, Hafṣa and ʿĀ'isha, confronted him he promised not to do it again, but then, not able to resist temptation, he slept with her a second time and justified it by placing a statement in the Qurʾān, claiming it was revealed by God that he could break his oath.[67] The second example concerned Muḥammad's 'incest' with his adopted son Zayd's ex-wife (Zaynab bint Jaḥsh). Similarly, Muḥammad again claimed that God had given him permission to engage in the illicit affair.[68] When he was confronted by Zayd, Muḥammad simply responded, 'Be quiet, God has given her to me.'[69] With the above mentioned, the first part of the chapter concluded, citing Jerome and Aristotle for support, that it was against all common sense for a messenger of the divine law to be such an 'impure, gross, uncouth, and carnal man.'[70]

The second major argument alleging that the Qurʾān was irrational concerned its physical description of paradise.

> [Muḥammad] sets man's highest and final good (eternal blessedness) in fleshly desire. For throughout the Qurʾān he promises his Saracens this blessedness: that they will recline in well-watered gardens, with young, beautiful, modest women and mistresses dressed in purple. Gold and silver goblets will be on the tables along with all sorts of costly spices. All these things he recounts particularly in chapter *al-Raḥmān*.[71]

Admittedly, the *Verlegung* continued on, the Bible speaks of paradise in terms of a lavish, heavenly banquet, but Luther explained that such physical images pointed to a deeper spiritual truth, which was that salvation consisted mainly in knowing God. Even Aristotle, in his *Ethics* and *Metaphysics*, knew that the highest goal, the end of life, was a life of understanding and knowledge. To the characterisation of paradise as a physical as opposed to a spiritual existence, Luther added his own rhetorical questioning: if eternal life meant that there will no

---

[67] See Q 66:2.

[68] See Q 33:37.

[69] *Verlegung*, WA 53:316.13: 'Weh dir, Gott hat mir sie gegeben.'

[70] *Verlegung*, WA 53:316.20–22: '… unsauber, grober, unzüchtiger, fleischlicher Mensch.'

[71] *Verlegung*, WA 53:322.8–9: 'Er des Menschen höhest und letze gut (die ewige seligkeit) setzt in fleischliche wollust. Denn durch den gantzen Alcoran verheisst er seinen Sarracenen diese seligkeit, das sie werden besitzen wasserreiche Garten, frawen und nebenfrawen, Jung, seuberlich, sittig, in Purpurkleidern, gulden und silbern becher uber den Tisschen, und allerley kösktliche speise, solchs alles erzelet er sonderlich im Capitel Elrahman.'

longer be sickness, hunger, thirst, dying, or any other human deficiency, of what use would there be in eating and drinking? If eating and drinking were present in heaven, then other normal bodily necessities and functions must also be present, such as sweating and farting? What sort of salvation is this? If sexual intercourse continues in paradise, will there still be childbirth? If so, what sort of paradise is it for a woman to go through the pangs of childbirth? If not, what is the purpose of sexual desire in paradise? This redundant argument coupled with the evidence from Muḥammad's life and several other references to the Qurʾān was enough, Luther thought, to prove the original assertion that Muḥammad's law was irrational.

The sixth charge levied against the Qurʾān was that it was full of lies and therefore one must consider it to be 'untrustworthy and false and that the one who wrote it was a liar and a father of lies.'[72] To demonstrate this, several passages were either referenced or cited and rebutted to show that the Qurʾān contains factual and theological errors. For example, the *Verlegung* claimed that the Qurʾān charged Christians with deifying their clergy,[73] which Luther described as an obvious error. Another factual error that he thought was very significant concerned the identity of Mary as Aaron's sister.[74]

> In the chapter *Maryam*, that is, Mary, it says that Mary the mother of Christ was the sister of Aaron. It is true that Moses and Aaron had a sister named Mary and all three were children of one father, *ʿImrān*, as Exodus 2 says. But between that Mary and this Mary, the mother of Jesus Christ, are over 5,000 years, and that Mary died in the desert where Moses led the children of Israel out of Egypt.[75]

The significance of this error was not just that it was so obviously untrue, but Luther was convinced that it had to have been placed there through divine intervention so that it would stand out to anyone

---

[72] *Verlegung*, WA 53:326.12–13: '… verdechtig und falsch, und dem zuschreiben, der ein Luegener und ein Vater der Luegen ist.'

[73] *Verlegung*, WA 53:328.7–8.

[74] See Q 19:29. Muslim commentators generally explain this as a reference to Mary's paternal lineage.

[75] *Verlegung*, WA 53:332.26–31: 'Im Capitel MarJem, das ist Maria, stehet, das Maria, die Mutter Christi, sey Aarons schwester gewest. War ists, das Moses und Aaron hatten eine schwester, Maria genennet, und waren alle drey eines Vaters Aram Kinder, wie Exod. ij. stehet. Aber zwischen jener Maria und dieser Maria, der Mutter Jhesu Christi, sind uber tausent fuenffhundert jar, Und jene Maria ist gestorben in der Wuesten, da Moses die Kinder Jsrael aus Egypten furet.' Regarding Amram, Luther means Moses 2, that is, Exodus 6:20, 15:20.

reading the Qurʾān. And upon detecting it, they would know that the Qurʾān could not be from a prophet of God.[76]

There were also manifest theological errors in the Qurʾān, charged the *Verlegung*. The one that warranted the most attention from Luther was sūra 6:101, that God cannot have a son since he does not have a partner. Not only is this contrary to what the Gospel teaches, Luther responded,

> But such wisdom is just as if I said: 'God cannot live for he does not eat or drink, does not shit or piss, does not sneeze or cough.' Christians certainly know how God can have a son, and it is not necessary that Muḥammad instruct us how God must first be a man and obtain a wife to produce a son.[77]

Rather than explaining how Christians might know (*wissen*) how it is possible for God to have a son, though, Luther resorted to an *ad hominem* attack. In addition to his marginal note, 'Women are Muḥammad's god, heart, and eternal life',[78] he continued by charging the prophet with being infatuated by the flesh of women so much so that his thoughts, speech, and actions concentrated on the conquest of the opposite sex. For Muḥammad, he claimed, 'it must always be flesh, flesh, flesh.'[79]

The list of the lies of Islam was complemented further by several examples of even more absurd anecdotes or 'preposterous tomfoolery' (*ungereimpter narrenteiding*) from Muslim tradition. Apparently Luther thought that the more absurd and condemning the evidence the better, for he rendered all of the *Confutatio*'s Latin in German at this point. One 'tradition' that he thought was especially damning was the following:

> Muḥammad has written a book of 12,000 marvellous words. Now several among them [his companions] wondered and asked if they were all reliable and true. [Muḥammad] replied, 'there are only 3,000 reliable [words]. The others, however, are all lies.' And when one now finds something false in this book, the Saracens say, 'O Muḥammad said

[76] *Verlegung*, WA 53:334.1–2.

[77] *Verlegung*, WA 53:334.27–31: 'Aber solche klugheit ist eben, als wenn ich spreche: 'Gott kan nicht leben, denn er isst und trincket nicht, kacket und pisset nicht, rotzet und hustet nicht.' Die Christen wissen wol, wie Gott einen Son haben kan, und ist nicht not, das Mahmet uns lere, wie Gott mueste zuvor ein Man sein, der ein Weib hette, einen Son zu zeugen.'

[78] *Verlegung*, WA 53:334: 'Weib ist Mahmets Gott, Hertz und ewiges Leben.'

[79] *Verlegung*, WA 53:334.34–35: 'Es mus alles fleisch, fleisch, fleisch sein.'

> himself [that] they are not all true. This part belongs to one of these parts. The others, nevertheless, remain true.'[80]

Still following the Latin, he continued, 'it seems to me that they also do this with the Qurʾān, for although they can find many lies within even still, because several truthful words are also found within, they still regard it as God's word.'[81] Luther was sure that they did this with the Qurʾān, for he wrote in the margin that here Muḥammad called his own bluff (*Kuckuc seinen namen*) and he thus reasoned: 'The Qurʾān lies and yet is still regarded as God's word, thus the God of Muḥammad must be a liar.'[82]

The *Verlegung* rounded out the accusation of lying against Muḥammad and the Qurʾān by suggesting that Muslims themselves knew all of the above (and more) to be lies. The fact that Islamic scholars would not openly debate the veracity of the Qurʾān, as Riccoldo allegedly experienced, nor would allow it to be translated was also indicative of its obvious falsehoods.

The next accusation against the 'law of the Saracens' was that it condoned compulsory conversion and murder. Rather than proving this from the Qurʾān,[83] though, the *Verlegung* cited three anecdotes from the biography of Muḥammad.

---

[80] *Verlegung*, WA 53:338.26–340.5: 'Jtem Mahmet hat ein Buch geschrieben von zwelfftausent wunderbarlichen worten, Da sich nu etliche wunderten und fragten, ob dieselbigen alle warhafftig war weren, Anwortet er, Es weren allein dreytausent warhafftig, Die andern aber alle erlogen. Und wenn man nu in diesem Buche etwas falsches findet, sprechen die Sarracenen: "o hat doch Mahmet selbs gesagt, Es sey nicht alles war. Und dis stueck ist der selben eines, das ander bleibt gleichwol warhafftig."'

[81] *Verlegung*, WA 53:340.5–7: 'So duenckt mich, thun sie auch mit dem Alcorano, Denn wiewol viel luegen drinnen befunden werden, Doch, weil auch etliche warhafftige sprueche drinnen sind, halten sie jn fur Gottes wort.' This is, of course, not to be found in the Qurʾān. Neither did Muḥammad write a book. This is rather a reference to the distinction between sound and unsound tradition (*ḥadīth*), which has been seriously corrupted from the somewhat clearer passage from *ClS*. While no one has identified just what book Riccoldo referred to when he first offered this evidence against the reliability of the prophet Muḥammad's words, it seems he may have been referring to the *ḥadīth* collector Muslim ibn al-Ḥajjāj (d. 875). It is said that his collection, *Saḥīḥ Muslim*, 'contained 3,000 [others say 4,000] authentic traditions' (*DI*, 423; cf. *EI*^{2} 7:691–692).

[82] *Verlegung*, WA 53:340: 'Alcoran leuget, und sol doch Gottes wort sein, Also mus Gott des Mahmets lügner sein.'

[83] In fact, and ironically, the only passage from the Qurʾān quoted in the chapter containing this argument is from the well-known sūra 2:256: 'Let there be no compulsion in religion.'

> One reads that Muḥammad's Uncle was brought to him saying, 'Dear nephew, son of my brother, what happens if I do not do this [i.e., follow you]?' Muḥammad responded, 'Oh Uncle, I will kill you.' He [Muḥammad's Uncle] then said, 'Can it be no other way?' 'No other [way]', said Muḥammad. 'Well then, I will follow you, only with the tongue, not with the heart, out of fear of the sword.' And ʿUmar ibn al-Khattāb [d. 644], being forced, said, 'Lord, you know that I only became a Saracen out of fear of death.' Similarly, the son of Empiasca also became a Saracen out of fear of the sword. He [even] sent letters to Mecca … wherein he warned those in the city of the arrival of Muḥammad, that they should guard themselves from the power of the teachings of Muḥammad.[84]

In addition to forced conversion, the argument continued, Islam also encouraged tyranny by enforcing its law at pain of death. As an example Luther told his readers that when Muslims gather together to hear a sermon their preachers brandished a sword, and held it out before the people in order to frighten them into submission. And from this he concluded, 'Therefore it is certain that the Saracen's [law] is a murderous, ruthless law; it is not God's but the Devil's.'[85]

Returning to allegations based on a comparison between the Qurʾān and the Bible, the eighth argument began with the following assertion: 'what is from God is well ordered …. One sees this both in nature and holy Scripture.'[86] Regardless of whether one was a Christian or a Muslim, upon reading the Torah, Prophets, and Gospels they would know

---

[84] *Verlegung*, WA 53:342.21–31: 'Also lieset man, das zum Mahmet sein Vetter, seins Vaters bruder bracht ward, der sprach: 'Wie, lieber Vetter, du son meines bruders, wenn ichs nicht thette?' Antwortet Mahmet: 'o Vetter, so toedte ich dich.' Er aber sprach: 'kans denn nicht anders sein?' 'Nicht anders', sprach Mahmet. Da sagt sein Vetter: 'Wolan, ich wil dir folgen, allein mit der Zungen, nicht mit dem Hertzen, aus furcht des Schwerts.' Und Omar, der son Catem padi, gezwungen, sprach: 'Herr, du weissest, das ich allein aus furcht des todtes ein Sarracen werde.' Also ward der son Empiasca auch aus furcht des Schwerts ein Sarracen, Der sandte Brieue gen Meccha (welche ein Weib in jren Haren verborgen bracht), darin er sie in der stad warnete von der zukunfft Mahmet, das sie sich hueten solten fur der gewalt der Lere des Mahmets.' Riccoldo derived these stories from *Ld*, 4.3. On Muḥammad's (paternal) Uncle, ʿAbbās ibn ʿAbd al-Muṭṭalib (d. 619), see *EI²* 3:152–154. Regarding the other two stories, Burman notes, 'These two anecdotes are clearly of Christian fabrication, though they have a distant connection' to two conversion stories in Ibn Isḥāq's, *The Life of Muḥammad: A Translation of Ibn Isḥāq's Sīrat Rasūl Allāh*, trans. Alfred Guillaume (London: Oxford University Press, 1955), 184–185, 224–230 (cf. *Ld*, 265n2).

[85] *Verlegung*, WA 53:346.14–15: 'Also ists gewis, das der Sarracenen ein Mördisch wütiges Gesetz, Nicht Gottes, sondern des Teuffels ist.'

[86] *Verlegung*, WA 53:346.18–19: 'Was von Gott ist, das ist wol geordent … Das sihet man beide an der Natur und heiliger Schrifft.'

for certain that they were from God. Not only did each book progress in an orderly, chronological manner. They were also clearly anchored in history, referring to historical figures throughout. The Qurʾān, on the other hand, was devoid of order. It did not refer to the time in which the events recorded took place. Both the affairs and speeches that it recounted were completely unorganised and, while the first four chapters maintained some semblance of order and even mention some historical figures, the remaining chapters were in complete disarray thereby proving the original thesis 'that the Qurʾān is not God's law for it is disorderly.'[87]

The ninth charge raised against the Qurʾān, perhaps the most pedantic of them all, is that on account of its unjust and undignified teachings it was shameful. In addition to instances already referred to above (such as when he broke his vow to his wives, his marriage to his adopted son's ex-wife, etc.), the *Verlegung* provided two further examples to support this allegation. Citing Qurʾān 8:41, where a fifth of the spoils of war were allotted for 'God and the messenger' to be distributed to the community, Luther commented, 'Tell me, has God become such a rascal that he permits robbery out of which he takes a fifth? Or is he so insufficiently poor that he is not able to take care of his needy and widows, orphans and strangers … and he then permits robbery?'[88]

Attributing such injustices to God was enough to prove the Qurʾān's indignity, but there was still another example, Luther continued. In sūra 4:110 one could read, 'you should not do evil for it does not please God. If you do evil, however, he is merciful and gracious and will gladly forgive you.'[89] From this passage, the *Verlegung* charged that, while it certainly seemed to forbid sin, in reality this and other passages from the Qurʾān gave license to sin, for regardless of what one did they were assured they would be forgiven by God. There was no reason for anyone to exercise restraint when no punishment is proffered for wrong doing. What was worse, though, is that all this and more was attributed

---

[87] *Verlegung*, WA 53:346.17: 'Das der Alcoran nicht Gottes Gesetz ist, Denn es zu unördig ist.'

[88] *Verlegung*, WA 53:348.29–32: 'Sage mir, Jst Gott so ein schalck worden, das er Rauben erleubet, auff das er den fuenfften teil neme? Oder ist er so duerfftig arm, das er seine Armen und Widwen, Waisen und Frembdling (davon er dasselbs redet) nicht erneeren kan, er lasse denn dazu rauben?'

[89] *Verlegung*, WA 53:350.2–4: 'So ist doch solch verbot mehr ein zulassen, Denn er spricht: "jr solt nichts boeses thun, denn es gefellet Gotte nicht, Thustu es aber, so ist er barmhertzig und gnedig, und wird dirs gern vergeben."'

to God. In conclusion, Luther wrote, 'what [Muḥammad] wished to do or had done he laid before God as if he commanded him to do it. From this came every evil thing as if it had been commanded in his law—murder, robbery, the breaking of marital vows …. [T]herefore it is no wonder that this law satisfies the Devil so much.'[90]

The tenth and final allegation against the Qur'ān is that its text is untrustworthy. Anecdotes describing its composition during the years following Muḥammad's death were thrown together in order to show that it was the product of highly dubious circumstances. Luther recounted that there were many different versions of the Qur'ān, and those who were known to have understood it, that is, those who knew most if not all of it by heart, could not come to any agreement regarding the proper reading. This confusion lasted until the time of Marwān ibn al-Ḥakam (623–685), who established the text now in existence and burned all the rest.[91] There was another earlier tradition, Luther explained, that was nevertheless just as revealing.

> Several [other sources] say that Muḥammad died from poisoning and at that time the people did not have the Qur'ān. However, at the time that Abū Bakr [632–634] assumed power, he commissioned every reading should be brought together, which he published. And thus the Qur'ān was put together [in the form of] which they now have. The others he burned.[92]

Further evidences elucidating the dubious nature of the Qur'ānic text could be found elsewhere in 'their histories', the *Verlegung* continued. For example,

> The chapter on divorce [sūra 65] was previously longer then the chapter cow (ox) [sūra 2], having at first 230 verses and now no more than 22. The others say that the chapter (ox) had 1,000 verses but now 87. They

---

[90] *Verlegung*, WA 53:352.6–11: 'Was er wolte thun oder gethan haben, das legt er Gotte zu, als ders geböte zu thun. Daraus ist alles böses komen, als hette es Gott in seinem Gesetz geheissen, Morden, Rauben, Ehebrechen … darumb ists nicht wunder, das den Teuffeln dis Gesetz wolgefallen hat.'

[91] Zayd ibn Thābit (d. 665) under the auspices of 'Uthmān ibn 'Affān (644–656), the third rightly guided caliph, is generally regarded as overseeing the establishment of the final canonical text of the Qur'ān, although Marwān, 'Uthmān's secretary and future Umayyad caliph, is said to have played a part in destroying any variant readings. See Watt, *Bell's Introduction*, 42–44; *EI²* 6:621–623.

[92] *Verlegung*, WA 53:358.14–17: 'Auch sagen etliche, das Mahmet an vergifft gestorben sey, Und dazumal habe das volck keinen Alcoran gehabt. Aber da Empeumpecer das regiment an nam, befalh er, das ein jeder solt zu samen lesen, was er kuendte. Und stellet also den Alcoran, den sie jtzt haben, Die andern verbrandte er.' On the early attempt by caliph Abū Bakr, see Watt, *Bell's Introduction*, 40–42.

> also speak of a powerful man with the name of al-Ḥajjāj [d. 693], who took 85 verses out of the Qur'ān and added many others with a different meaning.[93]

Whatever the case, the above evidence was compelling enough for Luther to note in the margin that 'the Turks did not know where the Qur'ān came from.'[94]

Clearly the arguments produced above would have caused Luther's German readers to abhor Islam and the Turks. It would have been extremely rare and virtually impossible for anyone to investigate further the claims of the *Verlegung* to verify its accuracy. After all, it appeared to be replete with legitimate references to the Qur'ān. Even Luther's learned colleague Philip Melanchthon described it as a 'useful and pious incitement against the insane Muḥammadans',[95] and, nearly three quarters of a century later, the Lutheran pastor and first German to render the Qur'ān into the vernacular would point his readers to the *Verlegung* in the Jena edition of Luther's works so that they too could refute the Turks.[96] Even some contemporary scholars, particularly those of a Lutheran confession, see it as 'helpful in providing understanding of the true nature of Islam when compared to Christianity.'[97] Nevertheless, this work is not above criticism from the standpoint of modern scholarship, especially considering that it is still being hailed as required reading for Christians engaging in discourse with Muslims.[98]

Norman Daniel's erudite assessment of Riccoldo da Monte di Croce's *Confutatio* applies and in many ways ought to be amplified in

---

[93] *Verlegung*, WA 53:358.5–10: 'Auch findet man in jren Historien, das das Capitel vom Ehescheiden lenger gewest sey, denn das Capitel Bouis (Ochse), das zu erst zwey hundert und dreissig sprueche gehabt und nu nicht mehr denn xij hat. Die andern sagen, Das das Capitel (Ochse) habe tausent sprueche gehabt, Nu aber lxxxvij. Sie sagen auch von einem gewaltigen mit namen Elgas, der habe vom Alcoran lxxxv sprueche gethan, und so viel andere hinzu gethan eins andern sinnes.' On Abū Muḥammad al-Ḥajjāj, see *EI²* 4:319. Although this is certainly inflated, there is evidence for missing passages. See Watt, *Bell's Introduction*, 45–47; Steven Masood, *The Bible and the Qur'an: A Question of Integrity* (Cumbria, OM Publishing, 2001), 93–99; John Gilchrist, *Jamʿ Al-Qur'an: The Codification of the Qur'an Text* (n.p., 1989), 89–99.

[94] *Verlegung*, WA 53:358: 'Die Türcken wissen nicht, wo der Alcoran herkome.'

[95] *Praemonitio*, CR 4:807: '… utilem et piam admonitionem contra Mahometica deliria.'

[96] Salomon Schweigger, *Alcoranus Mahometicus, Das ist: Der Türcken Alcoran, Religion und Aberglauben* (Nürnberg: Simon Halbmaier, 1616), 3ᵛ.

[97] Thomas Pfotenhauer, *Islam in the Crucible* (New Haven: Lutheran News, 2002), iv.

[98] See Pfotenhauer, *Islam*, iii–xiv.

the case of Luther's *Verlegung*.[99] While Luther, like Riccoldo, was not interested in deliberately misrepresenting Islam, his acceptance of the latter's rather arbitrary extraction and assemblage of Qur'ānic and other Islamic texts led him to distort not only Muslim beliefs but also to accept arguments that, although he thought they were legitimate, would certainly not have been considered an appropriate interpretation of the facts by a Sunnī Muslim Turk.[100] Luther certainly preferred the absurd over the rational. Thus, while he removed a host of intricate arguments against the Qur'ān, he was eager to include every Islamic legend that Riccoldo included.[101] The more ridiculous the story the more he seems to have preferred it.

Another aspect of Riccoldo that was amplified by Luther's translation is the extreme pedantry. Whereas 'Riccoldo never left polemic effect to facts alone, but insisted on expounding the significance of every detail', by cutting out many of Riccoldo's rants Luther actually raised the pedantry to, in many cases, mere haughty assertions.[102] To summarise, following Norman Daniel, Luther, like Riccoldo, appears to have thought that 'whatever tended to harm the enemies of truth was likely itself to be true.'[103]

Norman Daniel's judgment on Riccoldo and, *mutatis mutandis*, Luther is especially clear when the arguments that the Reformer dwelled on the most are considered. In Luther's addendum, which he entitled *Verlegung Mart[in] Luther*, were two evidences that he considered particularly condemnatory of Islam. First, with reference to the alleged work of Muḥammad containing 12,000 words of which only 3,000 were acknowledged by Muslims to be true, Luther seized the opportunity to push the apparent absurdity of those who remained loyal to Islam

[99] See Daniel, *Islam*, 255–301.

[100] Of course, apart from a few rare instances, there was probably not much dialogue at all between Muslims and Christians in the early sixteenth century. The language barrier would have been a difficult enough hurdle let alone the animosity between the two. In accounting for the frequent misuse of Islamic materials, Lewis' words must be recalled: 'The "Great Debate" between Christendom and Islam … was, in its verbal aspect, a monologue, from which the Muslim interlocutor was absent' (*Islam*, 13).

[101] See especially his chapter on *al-mi'rāj* in *Verlegung*, WA 53:360.21–364.3. Cf. *CA*, WA 53:359.14–365.21. Daniel notes that the legendary material recounted was, however, 'authentically Islamic' even though 'any orthodox Muslim might disown' it (*Islam*, 260, 263).

[102] Cf. WA 53:267.

[103] Daniel, *Islam*, 275.

even further. Explicitly identifying the Qurʾān,[104] and not Islamic tradition, as the book wherein 'Muḥammad himself confesses that among his 12,000 words only 3,000 are true [and] the other 9,000 are all lies', Luther concluded, telling his readers, that Muslims are completely irrational for remaining in the faith. 'If the Turks or Saracens seriously believe such a book of Muḥammad—the Qurʾān—they are not worthy to be called men since they have been robbed of common human reason.' They were *ummenschen*. Moreover, because they believed a book in which only a quarter of the words were considered truthful he thought that 'the Turks or Muḥammadans must be such people who are joined with the Devil.'[105]

The second piece of telling evidence, according to Luther, was the dubious history of the Qurʾānic text. The *Confutatio* and now the *Verlegung* had disclosed, from Muslim historiographers themselves, that there were several different versions of the Qurʾān before the canonical text was established, which were still in existence. 'They have had so many versions of the Qurʾān, several were burned, corrupted, or cut up and mutilated that they themselves do not know what is the true Qurʾān or [rather] the true book of lies.'[106] He explained how this happened by, admittedly, speculating.

> It appears as if Muḥammad might have authored something. Afterwards there were so many copies on top of this. One fabricated this, another fabricated that, removing and adding according to one's own imagination so much so that only the name of Muḥammad has remained on it.[107]

---

[104] Salomon Schweigger, the Lutheran chaplain to the Habsburg embassy in Constantinople (1577–1581), repeated this gross error in his travel narrative. In his chapter on the 'Inhalt des verfluchten Alcurans', he sarcastically noted, 'Das Best im Alcuran ist dieses, da gemeldt wird, daß unter den 12000 Sprüchen nicht mehr als die 3000, das ist der vierte Teil, wahr sei; die 9000 übrigen seien erlogen' (*Zum Hofe des türkischen Sultans*, ed. Heidi Stein [Leipzig: Hans Jörg Sittauer, 1986], 180).

[105] *Verlegung*, WA 53:388.11–389.17: 'Bekennet Mahmet selbs, das unter seinen zwelff tausent worten allein drey tausent war sind, die andern neuntausent alle erlogen … Wo nu die Türcken oder Sarracenen solchem Buch des Mahmets, dem Alcoran, mit ernst gleuben, So sind sie nicht werd, das sie Menschen heissen, als die gemeiner Menschlichen vernunfft beraubt, lauter ummenschen … So müsten die Türcken oder Mahmetisten solche Leute sein, die sich mit dem Teuffel verbinden.'

[106] *Verlegung*, WA 53:391.30–32: 'Haben sie so mancherley Alcoran gehabt, etliche verbrand, etliche geflickt, etliche zerstümpelt und verhümpelt, das sie selbs nicht wissen, Welchs der rechte Alcoran oder das recht Lügenbuch sey.'

[107] *Verlegung*, WA 53:391.32–35: 'Es sihet, als hab der Mahmet vieleicht etwas gestellet, darnach seien so viel Meister drüber komen, da einer dis, der ander das dran gezimmert, ab und zu gesetzt, nach eines jedern dünckel, das der Name Mahmet allein dran beklieben ist.'

Luther thus concluded that the only reason the present text 'must be regarded as the true Qur'ān was the result of arbitrary [decisions] and force.'[108] While this is not quite as absurd as the previous anecdote[109]—that Muḥammad confessed to lieing—it demonstrates that Luther preferred the most damning evidence, sometimes without questioning its origin, in waging his attacks on Islam.

Luther's Demonstration of Christian Truth from the Qur'ān

Following what was regarded as a damning *exposé* of Muḥammad and the Qur'ān the final chapters of the *Verlegung* shifted from offence to defence. Ironically, while Luther identified the Qur'ān as the *Gesetz Teuffels* he confidently followed the *Confutatio* in its attempt to demonstrate fundamental Christian doctrines from it, even adding several full paragraphs of his own to the text.

The *Verlegung* first attempted to demonstrate Christian dogma by formulating questions arising from a Christian exegesis or what Nicholas of Cusa called a *pia interpretatio* of the Qur'ān.[110] It began with the following challenge: 'we want to present six questions to the Saracens, from which, if they are not able to respond, they should, rationally speaking, recognise and convert to the truth.'[111] With the underlying assumption that the Holy Spirit somehow caused Muḥammad to express, albeit subtly, fundamental Christian doctrine,[112] the first three

[108] *Verlegung*, WA 53:391.35–37: 'Und der jtzige Alcoran (so zu reden) aus wilköre und mit gewalt mus der rechte Alcoran heissen.'

[109] In general, the text of the Qur'ān seems rather well preserved from the earliest attempts to collate it into one volume. There is, however, some evidence of variant readings and the burning of what was considered a spurious copy, although it is not nearly as indicting as Luther (or Riccoldo) thought. For a modern attempt to explain what might have happened with regard to its collection, see Watt, *Bell's Introduction*, 40–56.

[110] *CrA*, 1014. Nicholas of Cusa, who considered the *CA* to be the best anti-Islamic polemic (*CrA*, 966), took this method of extracting Christian doctrine and used it extensively throughout his *Cribratio*.

[111] *Verlegung*, WA 53:364.6–8: 'Sechs fragen wollen wir den Sarracenen furhalten, Auff welche, so sie nicht antworten koennen, billich sich erkennen solten und zur warheit bekeren.'

[112] 'Also hat jn der heilige Geist vermanet und getrieben, das er hat muessen mit worten unsers Glaubens hoechsten Artickel aussprechen' (*Verlegung*, WA 53:366.31–33). This assumption is not expressed in this section of the *Confutatio Alcorani* but was added into the text by Luther. While, for Luther, the specific activity of the Holy Spirit was to convert human beings through the medium of word and sacrament, he did on occasion

questions all tried to demonstrate that the Qurʾān expressed the doctrine of the Trinity.

The initial question was grammatical. 'What does the Qurʾān mean when it frequently introduces God speaking in many persons?'[113] After citing passages where God spoke in the third person plural,[114] Luther suggested, adding his own interpretation, that 'Muḥammad should have been able to recognise from his own words' that when 'God refers to himself as "We" or "Us", he is saying that there is one God and three persons.'[115] This should have been especially clear when he said,

> O people of the book, Do not become lax in your law and say nothing about God except the truth, that Christ Jesus, the son of Mary, is a messenger of God, and is God's word, which [God] impressed upon her through the Holy Spirit.[116]

This was *prima facie* evidence for a trinitarian interpretation of passages that have God speaking in the plural, Luther continued, for here Muḥammad specifically mentioned God, the incarnate word, and the Holy Spirit. The blame for failing to recognise the Trinity in the Qurʾān, however, was all Muḥammad's for he could not comprehend the difference between the assertion of three persons in one divine essence and three separate Gods.

The next two questions employed to uncover the triune nature of God in the Qurʾān concerned the above referenced passage as well as other Qurʾānic citations and their mention of the Holy Spirit and equating of Jesus to a word of God. Regarding references to the Holy Spirit, particularly Qurʾān 2:87 (where Jesus is strengthened by the Spirit), 21:91 (where the Spirit is breathed into Mary), and 4:171 (where God gives his Spirit), the *Verlegung* argued that the Holy Spirit must be a divine personage. To interpret the Spirit as an angel such as Gabriel (or

---

refer to the universal activity of the Spirit whereby the 'Spirit is present and at work in all creation as well as in every human deed, even in every natural occurrence' (Lohse, *Luther's Theology*, 235, 237; cf. WA 39/2.29–31, WA 39/1:103.16–21 [LW 34:173]).

[113] *Verlegung*, WA 53:364:9–10: 'Was wil der Alcoran damit, das er so offt Gott einfürt redend als in viel personen?'

[114] Q 2:34, 2:87, 21:16, 57:27.

[115] *Verlegung*, WA 53:366.21–23: 'Also hette Mahmet auch wol muegen aus seinen eigen worten vermanet, da Gott sich 'Wir' oder 'uns' nennet, sagen, das es ein Gott und drey Personen weren.'

[116] *Verlegung*, WA 53:25–18: 'O jr geselschafft des Buchs, Seid nicht lass in ewerm Gesetz und sagt nichts von Gott, denn die warheit, Das Christus Jhesus, Marien son, ist ein Apostel Gottes, und Gottes wort sey, Welchs er in sie gelegt hat durch den heiligen Geist.' Cf. Q 4:171.

Jibrīl) was an unnatural reading of the text. Thus, since there 'must be one, single, indivisible God, hereupon it follows that the one who gives the Spirit and the Spirit being received must in essence be one God, [but] divided by persons.'[117] Continuing on, that Jesus was the eternal word of God and therefore the third person in the Trinity is argued, again, on the basis of passages from the Qur'ān. Citing sūra 3:45 and 4:171, where Jesus is identified as the word from God, it began by boldly stating that Muḥammad 'confessed, to be sure, that Christ is God's word.'[118] With reference to Qur'ān 4:171, where God bestows his word on Mary, the argument is put forward that this cannot be a human word or, in other words, a messenger bearing God's word for there were plenty of other prophets who proclaimed God's word and none of them are referred to as a word from God. So he must be a divine word or *Gottes Wort*. Moreover, since Christ is God's word he must be eternal since God is eternal, and, employing the same argument for the divine personage of the Holy Spirit, 'hereupon it follows that God and his word must be, in essence, one God yet divided by persons.'[119] In conclusion, the *Verlegung* noted that this word of God in the Qur'ān was identical to the word, the co-creator of the world, spoken of in John 1:1–3. Luther then added, 'Muḥammad here once again with words, indeed with our words (although unwittingly), confesses the high article of the Holy Trinity in God.'[120]

Having offered proof for the Trinity or at least enough evidence, he thought, to rattle a Muslim Turk's conviction that the Qur'ān rejected the doctrine of the Trinity outright, the remaining three questions were employed to further unsettle Islamic convictions. First, Luther asked why Muslims do not read the Bible since its books are praised so highly in the Qur'ān. Referring to previous arguments, such as the inconsistency between the claim that Christians and Jews corrupted their Scriptures and Muḥammad's high regard for them as well as the

---

[117] *Verlegung*, WA 53:368.18–20: 'So nu mus ein einiger unzertrenlicher Gott sein, folget heiraus, das der den geist gibt und der Geist, so gegeben wird, müssen wesentlich ein Gott, personlich unterscheiden sein.'

[118] *Verlegung*, WA 53:368.30–31: 'So bekennet er nu allerding, das Christus Gottes wort sey.'

[119] *Verlegung*, WA 53:370.22–23: 'So folget hieraus, das Gott und sein Wort müssen wesentlich ein Gott und doch persönlich unterscheiden sein.'

[120] *Verlegung*, WA 53:370.25–27: 'Das also der Mahmet hie abermal mit worten, ja mit unsern worten (wie wol unwissentlich) bekennet den hohen Artickel von der heiligen Dreifaltigkeit in Gott.' Cf. 368.21–23.

dubious history behind the collection of the Qurʾānic text, the *Verlegung* suggested that the real reason why Muslims did not read the Bible was conspiratorial. Muslim leaders knew that if the general population read the Judeo-Christian Scriptures they would discover the manifest lies in the Qurʾān. And so they instructed the people to follow what the Qurʾān suggested with regard to non-Islamic religions: first, kill anyone who speaks against the Qurʾān; second, do not dispute with people holding opposing viewpoints; third, do not to trust anyone who is not a Muslim; and finally, be indifferent to other religious claims.[121] If Muslims did truly follow the Qurʾān, Luther added, they would eventually come to the truth and be saved. However, most of them, he continued, are not so noble and 'remain damned on account of their own Qurʾān.'[122]

Moving forward, the next argument asked why Muḥammad tried to associate himself with God by repeatedly saying things such as 'believe God and his messenger.' Such expressions appeared as if he wanted to be thought of as an associate of God, although, Luther added, he insisted throughout the Qurʾān that God does not have any associates. None of the former prophets spoke in this manner, he noted, with the exception of Christ who said, in John 14:1, 'Do you believe in God? Believe also in me.' With Christ, however, this was reasonable, given what had been demonstrated above, but with Muḥammad there was no evidence that he was a messenger of God. By claiming to be so, the *Verlegung* argued, he was guilty of unjustly associating himself with God.

Conjoined with the former question, the final argument put forward was a comparison of Christ with Muḥammad with the hopes of demonstrating the superiority of Christ. For example, the *Verlegung* began, Christ was announced by an angel, sanctified by the Holy Spirit, and conceived in a virgin by a miracle from God. Muḥammad, according to the Qurʾān, was an orphan who was only looked after by God the way he aided any human in need.[123] Christ is called God's word whereas Muḥammad was only a prophet. Christ was the promised descendant of Isaac. Muḥammad, on the other hand, was a descendant from Ishmael[124] of whom it was prophesied, in Genesis 16:12,

[121] See Q 9:29, 29:46, 3:118, 109:6 respectively.

[122] *Verlegung*, WA 53:374.10–11: 'Aber nu bleiben sie verdampt auch durch jren eigen Alcoran.'

[123] See Q 3:45–47, 93:6–8 respectively.

[124] See Ibn Isḥāq, *Sīrat Rasūl Allāh*, 3–4.

that he would be a wild man, hostile to everyone. Christ committed no sin, unlike Muḥammad, who was (once) an idolater, a murderer, a womaniser, and a robber. The most telling evidence, however, was that Christ performed countless miracles both to help humankind and to provide evidence of his deity. Muḥammad, on the other hand, performed no miracles of any value. Those that are attributed to him were all unlikely, foolish, and useless legends, occurring in secret, and therefore were not verifiable. The chapter concluded at a loss when it considered that, in light of the above questions, Muslims would probably not convert. 'Why then do the Saracens not now prefer Christ instead of Muḥammad? And prefer the gospel instead of the Qurʾān?'[125]

Following these six questions, the argument moved forward, again using the Qurʾān as its starting point, but this time trying to convince Muslims to read the Bible. Paradoxically, although he had previously indicated that the Holy Spirit caused Muḥammad to include Christian dogma in the Qurʾān, Luther added in the margin that whatever praise of Christ there was in it Muḥammad was not to be admired. Rather, he wrote, his acknowledgment of Christ was similar to when 'the demons praised Christ, God's son' in Matthew 8:29.[126] In any case, he then cited Qurʾān 5:46, 'we have prepared the way of men through Jesus Christ, Mary's son, the all truthful prophet, and have given him the gospel, which is the right [way] and light and manifest truth.'[127] Adding that such affirmations could be found in several places in the Qurʾān, he confidently claimed that, on the basis of these words, a Muslim is compelled to believe the gospel. Nevertheless, whether a Saracen believed Muḥammad or not, all they needed to do to see the truth of the gospel was to read the Gospel narratives.

The Qurʾān was used again as the starting point for an argument of another vein. Luther asserted that the biblical revelation and Christian faith is for all people whereas the Qurʾānic revelation and Muslim faith, because of its insistence that the Qurʾān remain only in the Arabic language, was by its own admission limited only to those who understood Arabic. 'Therefore one may reasonably ask them why God only wants to save the Saracens or those who can [comprehend] Ara-

[125] *Verlegung*, WA 53:378.9–10: 'Warumb folgen denn nu die Sarracenen nicht lieber Christo denn dem Mahmet? Und lieber dem Euangelio denn dem Alcoran?'

[126] *Verlegung*, WA 53:378.

[127] *Verlegung*, WA 53:378.30–31: '[Wir] haben jm das Euangelium gegeben, welchs ist das recht und Liecht und öffentliche warheit.'

bic.'[128] The Christian faith, on the other hand, because it sought to render the Bible into all languages and taught that 'God wishes that all men will be saved' is therefore superior.

In order to further convince Muslims to read the Bible, what followed in the *Verlegung* was a listing of evidences for the veracity and revelatory nature of the Bible *vis-à-vis* the Qur'ān. First, if a Muslim was to read Moses and the Prophets they would find them in complete harmony with the Gospel narratives. What he meant was that there was a unified theme throughout the Bible, which was the promise of the gospel first given in Genesis 3:15 and continually reiterated through the prophets until the advent of Christ. Secondly, with reference to the charge that the Qur'ān in Arabic was rhythmic and filled with alleged unseemly language, the Gospels are quite the opposite. It is so simple and straightforward that anyone could understand it. Moreover, again recalling arguments against the Qur'ān, '[the Gospels] are not full of self-praise. It does not use shameful, lascivious [words] but common, honourable words. There are no fables or idle talk, and although it does contain parables their meanings are self-explanatory. … Also, it does not permit murder, robbery, force or injustice.'[129] Quite the contrary, Luther wrote, amplifying and adding his own words, the Gospels teach that one should suffer 'according to God's will' and pray for enemies as well as persecutors and slanderers. Then, interpreting Qur'ān 109:6 as indicative of Muḥammad's religious indifference and therefore lack of assurance, and, Luther added, selfishness 'for he is only concerned if he might be saved not if others will be',[130] the argument concluded with the simple assertion that Christianity and, more narrowly, the gospel provided the means of salvation. Moreover, where the Qur'ān, he thought, was indifferent, the Bible demanded that the faith be propagated and defended. It was the nature of a reasonable faith that its confessor will 'demonstrate the ground and reasons for his deeds and doctrines. Otherwise, any fool might invent a law [or religion] and

---

[128] *Verlegung*, WA 53:380.16–18: 'Darumb man sie billich fraget, Warumb Gott allein die Sarrecenen, oder so Arabisch können, selig wil haben.'

[129] *Verlegung*, WA 53:380.29–34: '[Das Euangelium] ist nicht vol eigens lobens, Braucht auch nicht schampar, unzüchtige, sondern gemeine, ehrliche wort. Zuvor aus ist kein mehrlin oder gewessch drinnen. Und ob wol gleichnisse drinnen sind, die deuten sich selbs hernach … Item, es lesst keinen Mord, Raub noch gewalt odern unrecht zu.'

[130] *Verlegung*, WA 53:384.5–6: 'als fragt er allein, wo er selig sein moechte, nichts, wo die andern bleiben.'

establish whatever he wishes and thereafter say to those who ask about the grounds and reasons: "To me is my law, to you is your law."'[131]

This is quite a different approach to expounding and defending the Christian faith before a Muslim audience than what might be expected from Luther, who wrote some twenty years earlier (in 1521),

> How should we present our case, if a Turk were to ask us to give reasons for our faith? He doesn't care how long we have believed a certain way or how many or how eminent the people are who have believed this or that. We would have to be silent about all these things and direct him to the holy Scriptures as the basis for our faith.[132]

Luther's adoption of Riccoldo's peculiar way of providing reasons for the Christian faith represents a significant shift in Luther's apologetic thought. In fact, it seems as if Luther abandoned his earlier principle of Scripture alone as put forward in the statement above. What had occurred, however, was not an abandoning of the principle of *sola Scriptura* but rather a supplementation to it.

Mark U. Edwards has illustrated how the mature Luther—while the Scriptures were always the final adjudicator in matters of theological dogma—used whatever means possible in an attempt to prove his point.[133] Luther himself asserted this in his 1535 lectures on Paul's epistle to the Galatians when he wrote, 'But when you leave the doctrine of justification and have to engage in controversy with Jews, Turks, or sectarians, etc., about the power, wisdom, etc., of God, then you must use all your cleverness and effort and be as profound and subtle a controversialist as possible; for then you are in another area.'[134] Polemical and apologetic discourse with Muslims was certainly in 'another area' than inter-confessional dogmatic disputes and therefore one had to do what one could to destroy the rival creed of Islam.

The dire circumstances certainly contributed to Luther's use and restatement of Riccoldo's scholastic apologetic. It was aroused pri-

---

[131] *Verlegung*, WA 53:384.10–14: 'Und das gebuert auch einem weisen vernuenfftigen man, das er Grund und ursach seines thuns und lerens anzeige, Sonst moecht ein jglicher Narr Gesetz geben und stellen, was er wolt, Und darnach sagen denen, die jnen umb grund und ursach fragten: "Mir sey mein Gesetz, Euch sey ewr Gesetz."' Cf. Q 109:5.

[132] *Grund unnd ursach aller Artikel D Mart: Luther*, WA 7:315.9–13 (LW 32:10). Cf. his comments on the *versus classicus* for Christian apologetics (1 Peter 3:15) in *Epistel Sanct Petri*, WA 12:362.10–26.

[133] Edwards, *Last Battles*, 183 *et passim*.

[134] *In epistolam S. Pauli ad Galatas Commentarius*, WA 40/1:78.27–29, 78.6–8 (LW 26:29–30).

marily from the aggressive empire building of the Ottomans and the fear that just as Christians had been and were still being led astray by the papacy, the same would happen in the lands engulfed by the Turks.

In spite of the circumstances one should, however, be thankful for at least 'here amongst us in the domain of the pope', he wrote, '[God] has providentially and graciously kept the holy Scriptures, the text of the Gospel, and the Sacrament in public use in the churches.'[135] This should not lead one to be content with the *status quo*, however, for the Pope and the papacy far outdistanced Muḥammad and Islam (*Der Bapst auch den Mahmet weit ubertreffen*).

> [The Pope] has certainly initiated so many wars, murder, bloodshed amongst the kings, has robbed, stolen, plundered, and unrelentingly trashed so much land and so many people, and has also conducted himself with such arrogance over all the kings, and most blasphemously [it is all done] under the name of Christ. Muḥammad appears before the world as a pure saint in comparison to him.[136]

Nevertheless, viewing both the Turks and the papists from a distance, Luther saw the Roman church and Islam both as diabolical manifestations of the same enemy, Satan. The Turks and Islam were the external enemy (*den eusserlichen Feind*) whereas the papacy was the internal enemy (*inwendigen Feinde*). Even more apocalyptically, Muḥammad was the beast from the East and the Pope was the false prophet from the West. Both were sent to mislead and devastate the world.[137]

Luther envisioned himself as having been chosen and called by God to the middle of this battle between God and his church and Satan and his minions.[138] He had spent the last twenty years exposing the lies of the papacy. Now, with the *Verlegung*, he had exposed the lies of Islam. He therefore confidently concluded, absolving himself from his duties as Germany's *defensor evangelii*,

---

[135] *Verlegung*, WA 53:394.25–27: 'Hie bey uns hat er im Bapstumb gewaltlich und gnediglich die heilige Schrifft, den Text des Euangelij und die Sacrament erhalten in öffentlichem brauch und in den Kirchen.'

[136] *Verlegung*, WA 53:396.13–17: '[Der Bapst] wol so viel Krieg, Mord, Blutvergiessen unter den Königen gestifftet, So gros gut, Land und leut geraubt, gestolen, geplündert und on unterlas geschunden hat, Auch solche hoffart uber alle Könige getrieben, Und das alles unter Christus namen auffs lesterlichst, Das Mahmet möchte fur der Welt schier heilig gegen jm sein.'

[137] *Verlegung*, WA 53:394.9–17.

[138] Cf. Lohse, *Martin Luther*, 195–197.

> Well now, may God give us his grace and punish both Pope and Muḥammad together with their Devils. I have done that which is mine as a true prophet and preacher. Those who will not listen are to be let go, I, however, am now excused, and also on judgement day and into eternity. The ones who believe, however, will thank me here and there. For they are (where God gives fortune) the ones who approach God with faith, prayer, and perseverance and do their best. Help is in God the merciful father through his son Jesus Christ with the Holy Spirit. Amen.[139]

While copies of the Latin *Confutatio* were located throughout European libraries, its readership was limited to those who were not nearly as likely to become subjects of the Muslim Turks as were the German soldiers fighting the Ottoman army in the eastern borders of the empire or the general populace living in the Habsburg-Ottoman borderlands, much less the countless German Christians already subject to the Turks. To ensure that such people would be able to guard themselves against *Mahmets Glauben* Luther translated this medieval scholastic apologetic into the vernacular, altering the text as he saw fit to make it more palatable to an audience less inclined to understand formal theological argumentation.

The methodology of the *Verlegung* was straightforward. Since the essential articles of the Christian faith were above rational demonstration one should attack the Qurʾān first, showing it to be irrational, crude, and not befitting divine revelation. This would expose it for what it was: a book of the most heinous lies perpetrated by the Devil through Muḥammad. The bulk of the work was dedicated to this, and attempted to demonstrate it from ten different angles. According to Luther, neither the Qurʾān nor the prophethood of Muḥammad were foretold by prior revelation, nor did they conform to it or even basic reason. The Qurʾān contradicted itself, it was not confirmed by miracles, was irrational, full of lies, violent, disorderly, shameful, and, moreover, the text itself was compiled under dubious conditions. This was more than ample proof that it was not divinely revealed. In fact, according to Luther, it was obviously given by inspiration of the Devil.

---

[139] *Verlegung*, WA 53:396.28–35: 'Wolan, Gott gebe uns seine gnade und strafe beide, Bapst und Mahmet sampt jren Teuffeln. Ich habe das meine gethan als ein trewer Prophet und Prediger. Wer nicht hören wil, der mags lassen, Ich bin entschüldigt jtzt, fort an jenem tage und in ewigkeit, Die aber gleuben, warden mirs hie und dort dancken. Denn sei sinds (Wo Gott glück geben wird), die es umb Gott mit gleuben, beten und dulden verdienen und ddas beste thun warden. Das helffe jn Gott der barmhertzige Vater durch seinen lieben son Jhesum Christ mit dem heiligen Geist, gelobt in ewigkeit. Amen.'

In spite of this, Luther, following and even amplifying Riccoldo, still tried to use the Qur'ān as a base from which to demonstrate fundamental Christian doctrines such as the Trinity and the deity of Christ. He also tried to use it as a way to encourage Muslims to at least read the Bible and consider the claims of Christianity.

While the arguments put forward could be easily rebutted from an informed Muslim standpoint, the *Verlegung* served its primary intention well: to strengthen the faith of a Christian when tempted by Islam. There are, to be sure, a host of inaccuracies perpetuated and even amplified in Luther's translation of Riccoldo da Monte di Croce. Yet, for a German living in the sixteenth century whose contact with Islam would not have been in an atmosphere of rigorous and rational argumentation, it would have convinced him or even her that Islam was false and Christianity true.[140]

[140] In addition to Schweigger, *Alcoranus Mahometicus*, 3^{v}, see WA 53:270 for its inclusion in seventeenth-century 'instructions' for dealing with Turks.

CHAPTER EIGHT

LUTHER'S APOLOGY FOR CHRISTIANITY

Shortly after the *Verlegung des Alcoran* left Hans Lufft's press in Wittenberg Luther became embroiled in a controversy over the publication of the Qur'ān taking place in Basel.[1] His intervention in the affair resulted in the publication of a revised edition of Robert of Ketton's Latin translation of the Qur'ān, and introducing the text was a short, three-page preface authored by Luther himself. His *Praefatio Alcoranum* reveals the continuing interest he had in the development of Christian apologetics *vis-à-vis* the claims of Islam. It also illustrates his most mature, independent thought on Islam. In a few brief theses and their antitheses he explained efficiently and succinctly the polarities that existed between Christian and Muslim theology. These differences also made it clear, to Luther's mind, that Islam, contrary to its claim to be the religion of antiquity, was a diabolical innovation. He thus drew upon these fundamental contradictions in his explanation and defence of the evangelical faith in a sermon preached less than three weeks before his death. Both his *Praefatio Alcoranum* (1543) and sermon on the fourth Sunday after Epiphany (1546), the apologetic content of which has been ignored, contain his final theological engagement with Islam whereupon he concluded that Christianity—and not Islam—was the religion of Adam, 'Noah and the messengers after him' (Qur'ān 4:163).

Christian Apologetics vis-à-vis *Islam*

For centuries western Christendom, while certainly acknowledging the need for an apologetic response to Islam, had feared that if Christians read the Qur'ān they might be tempted to embrace Muḥammad's religion. Thus, every attempt to disseminate the text was accompanied by a preface, which, to some extent, acted as an apology for the study of the 'blasphemous book.'[2] This was not the case with Luther, though, for

[1] See pages 59, 91, 106 above.

[2] For example, in addition to Bibliander's *Apologia pro editione Alcorani*, also see Peter

he was convinced that, particularly since the Turks were threatening the eastern borders of the empire, Christians needed to be made aware of it. The uniqueness of his conviction is especially clear when his preface to it is contrasted with the one Philip Melanchthon also contributed to the project.[3] Luther's less confrontational colleague wrote his preface to warn Christians away from the 'delirium' of Muḥammad. Giving the short introduction the title *Praemonitio* rather than *Praefatio*, he began, 'at the outset, the Christian reader must be admonished to cling to this godly and salutary warning against the raging of Muḥammad.'[4] While there are many similarities between Luther and Melanchthon's text,[5] even a cursory read makes it clear that the former saw no danger in convinced or educated Christians reading Islamic sources, particularly the Qur'ān. In fact, as will be shown below, he encouraged that it be read especially by teachers of the church so that it could be responded to with a vigorous apologetic. Such a task was indeed necessary for the preservation of the church.

Luther began his preface by explaining the benefits of studying non-Christian religions. He noted how several works had recently been composed describing the customs and religious beliefs of the Jews, all of which not only caused 'pious minds' to be 'greatly confirmed in faith and love for the truth of the gospel' but also 'excited' these same godly people 'with a righteous hatred of the perversity of Judaism.'[6] The immediate benefits, however, served a much greater and more ambitious agenda, for ultimately he thought that publishing works on foreign religions would advance the church militant against the armies of the Devil by exposing the stratagems of Satan.

Luther envisioned the origins of this battle between the true church of God and false churches of Satan or between true religion exemplified by right doctrine and worship and false religion manifest in theological and ritual innovation as having begun shortly after the creation of the world. 'Just as in the beginning in paradise the Devil maddened

---

of Cluny's *Epistola ad dominum Bernhardum Claraevallis Abbatem* and Robert of Ketton's *Praefatio … de alcorani versione* located respectively in *Machumetis*, α3^{v}–β6 ^{r}, a1$^{r\text{-}v}$, a4$^{r\text{-}v}$.

[3] See Bobzin, 'Zur Anzahl', 213–219; *Der Koran*, 209–215.

[4] Melanchthon, *Praemonitio*, CR 5:11: 'Initio admonendus est lector Christianus, contra Mahometi furores praemunitionem hanc piam et salutarem tenendam esse.'

[5] Beltz asserts that Luther relied heavily upon Melanchthon. See 'Luthers Verständnis', 85. There is, however, no warrant for this. See Brecht, *Martin Luther: The Preservation of the Church*, trans. James Schaaf (Minneapolis: Fortress Press), 440n16.

[6] *Vorrede*, WA 53:569.6–9 (H-B, 262).

the unfortunate Eve with his lies and drove her from God, so it is certain that since that time it is by the Devil that the ragings of all the nations have been aroused against the true teaching of God.'[7] This was especially evident in the ancient Greek and Roman practices of human sacrifice and, from later antiquity, the worship of cats by the Egyptians, dogs by the Arabians, Greek Lampsacusian fertility gods, and other ghastly forms of idolatry.[8]

The Devil's depravity and influence over blinded human minds also took on more subtle forms. Judaism provided the best example, he wrote, for in spite of the evidence of the resurrection and the manifest testimony of the prophets, the Jews, obviously deluded by Satan, continued in their erroneous doctrines by not embracing Christ the promised messiah of old as true God and true man. Not only did they remain in their false doctrines, but they also blasphemed Christ and corrupted the Old Testament prophecies concerning him through false interpretations of the Hebrew Scriptures. This, Luther noted, was clearly the result of the Devil's attempt to incite the world against the right worship of God. Thus, while certainly 'the Devil would wish that such deceits of his would not be uncovered, would not be brought to light, would not be censured',[9] with the Qur'ān now in publication it was time for the church to confront one of his more recent abominations—Islam.

This, of course, was not to take the shape of a military crusade, as it had under the papacy, but instead a theological confrontation reminiscent of the activity of the early church. 'Just as the apostles condemned the errors of the nations, so now the church of God ought to refute the errors of all the enemies of the gospel.' More than an abstract exercise, polemical and apologetic theology was an act of worship for Luther, 'so that the glory of God and his Son Jesus Christ might be celebrated against the Devil and his instruments.'[10] Moreover, it was intrinsic to the proclamation of the gospel, for in order to make the truth known one also had to condemn errors and false doctrine militating against it. Thus, he exhorted his readers, 'Let us sound forth the voice of the gospel and bear witness that the crucified and resurrected Jesus Christ, whom the apostles show us, is truly the Son of

[7] *Vorrede*, WA 53:569.13–15 (H-B, 262).
[8] For Luther's sources, see WA 53:569n4–6.
[9] *Vorrede*, WA 53:570.12–13 (H-B, 263).
[10] *Vorrede*, WA 53:570.13–16 (H-B, 263).

God and Saviour, and let us denounce the errors of all those who wage war against the gospel.'[11]

As he expressed in his former writings, the ultimate goal in denouncing Islam was, first, to strengthen the faith of Christians and, second, the conversion of Turks. There was a subtle difference in his preface to the Qur'ān with regard to the latter, however, for in comparison to the *Verlegung*, wherein he noted that Muslims rarely converted, he seems slightly more optimistic of the captive-as-incognito-missionary enterprise. He wrote, 'Daniel and the other captives won over the King of Babylon and many other to true knowledge of God. The Goths, the Huns, and the Franks, although victorious, nevertheless, were converted by their captives to the worship of God. So now, too, God perhaps will call some of the Turks from their darkness through their Christian captives who have been instructed.' If this proved ineffective at least it would serve Christians living in the domain of Islam. 'Or perhaps God wished that those uninstructed Christians who are sorely oppressed in Illyria, Greece, and Asia, may be strengthened by those Christians who by reading this book will be able to fight more courageously on behalf of the gospel.'[12] In any case, the apologetic task was necessary both for clearing away obstacles to the gospel and the fortification of the faith of individuals. Most of all, though, Luther considered it a biblical imperative. Referring to Isaiah 59:21, John 15:7, and Ephesians 2:20, he wrote in reference to the whole of Scripture, 'Time and time again God commands that by its teaching God is to be known and acknowledged and that all other beliefs about God be rejected.'[13]

Having recently read the Qur'ān, Luther was convinced, and thus informed his readers, that not only did Islam put forward different beliefs about God, but it also proposed a religion that was fundamentally antithetical to Christianity. To demonstrate this he put forward a few theses and their Qur'ānic antitheses in an attempt to show that the latter was a theological innovation and therefore an enemy of the church necessarily deserving the attention of Christian apologetics. His first two propositions read: 'Just as the church of God is perpetual, so it is fitting that the church's teachings be perpetual' and 'the church of God by necessity embraces the prophets and apostles.'[14] Elsewhere in

[11] *Vorrede*, WA 53:570.21–24 (H-B, 263).
[12] *Vorrede*, WA 53:571.34–39 (H-B, 266).
[13] *Vorrede*, WA 53:571.5–6 (H-B, 264).
[14] *Vorrede*, WA 53:571.40–41, 571.42–572.1 (H-B, 266).

the preface he expressed this with perhaps more appropriate, less ecclesial language, 'the only true religion is that which was from the beginning handed on by God, with clear testimonies, through the prophets and apostles.'[15] For Luther, true religion was both indicative of and defined the church of God or the perpetual church (*perpetua ecclesia*), as he called it, and was established and extended forthwith from the time of Adam (*inde usque ab Adam*).[16]

The two dogmas that defined the essence of this perpetual church concerned theological anthropology and soteriology.[17] Claiming that they have 'always existed' and have been passed on 'from the very beginning', Luther identified the first as the doctrine 'concerning the causes of human weakness, calamity, and death, and especially concerning sin passed on after the fall of the first parents.' The second was the 'voice of the gospel … that the eternal Father willed that the Son of God become a sacrifice for sins.'[18] In other words, the perpetual doctrines of true religion passed forward from the time of Adam and Eve were original sin and human redemption through Christ.

Even though doctrines such as the Trinity and even the deity of Christ could be found in the Qur'ān, as he expressed in the *Verlegung*, he found neither of these two definitive and essential teachings in it. Concerning Adam and Eve's temptation, the Qur'ān records a similar episode, but in a much different setting and with completely different ramifications. While Adam and Eve did eat from a forbidden tree, Adam repented, was completely forgiven, and made a prophet. No curse is placed upon him, Eve, or their descendants,[19] and, perhaps most significantly, they retained their original righteousness, their *fiṭra*. Thus, Luther wrote that Muslims and the Qur'ān consider the Genesis account of the Fall and its subsequent catastrophic effect upon all

---

[15] *Vorrede*, WA 53:571.19–20 (H-B, 266).

[16] *Vorrede*, WA 53:571.3–5. Heinrich Bornkamm writes, 'To Luther, therefore, there had existed a unified church from paradise and it would exist until Judgement day' (*Luther and the Old Testament*, trans. Eric and Ruth Gritsch [Philadelphia: Fortress, 1969], 208). The concept of a perpetual community of Muslims or *Hanifiyya* extending from Adam forward is likewise present in the Qur'ān and Islamic tradition (see Cornelia Schöck, *Adam im Islam: Ein Beitrag zur Ideengeschichte der Sunna* [Berlin: Klaus Schwarz, 1993], 177).

[17] Cf. *Wider Hans Worst*, WA 51:478.18–26 (LW 41:194).

[18] *Vorrede*, WA 53:572.2–6 (H-B, 266).

[19] There are some accounts given by Qur'ānic commentators of curses being extended to Eve and the earth. See Brannon Wheeler, *Prophets in the Quran: An Introduction to the Quran and Muslim Exegesis* (London: Continuum, 2002), 29.

proceeding generations to be an 'inane fabrication.'[20] With regard to the redemption won by Christ, probably referring to the denial of the crucifixion in sūra 4:157 (the essence of the gospel in Luther's thought), he proposed that 'Muḥammad scorns this sacrifice and propitiation.'[21] Since Muḥammad and the Qur'ān failed to teach both of these fundamental doctrines Luther concluded and impressed upon all who read his preface that Islam was an invention of Muḥammad (*figmentum Mahometi*) and antithetical to true religion and the perpetual church of God.[22] As such, like any other false religious beliefs and practices it needed to be addressed by the church.[23]

This was all too obvious for Luther. He wrote, rather strikingly, 'Therefore as you firmly repudiate the beliefs of the Egyptians who worshipped cats and of the Arabians who worshipped dogs, so you shall denounce the new creation of Muḥammad.'[24] There was no middle ground for Luther. There was true religion and false religion, and whatever proved false was as equally guilty by association as any other erroneous belief, regardless of how absurd.

Even so, while Luther could juxtapose the errors of Islam with Judaism, papal beliefs, and even baser forms of idolatry such as animal worship, he was somewhat aware of the rationale of Islamic theology. In light of this reality and the increasing possibility of contacts between Turkish Muslims and western Christians, Luther asked, 'How will they fortify themselves against their beliefs?'[25] And he concluded his preface with the following exhortation:

> This must not be thought a matter of light importance, especially by those of us who teach in the church. We must fight on all fronts against the ranks of the Devil. In this age of ours how many varied enemies have we already seen? Papist defenders of idolatry, the Jews, the multifarious monstrosities of the Anabaptists, [the party of] Servetus, and others. Let

[20] *Vorrede*, WA 53:572.6–7 (H-B, 266).
[21] *Vorrede*, WA 53:572.3–4 (H-B, 266).
[22] *Vorrede*, WA 53:571.41–42 (H-B, 264).
[23] Luther's theses against Islam would be widely disseminated when Melanchthon organised them into an almost syllogistic argument and included them in what would be 'widely used in the Protestant world as a text for university lectures and as a teaching book in schools and for the instruction of young princes', the *Chronica Carionis* (Melanchthon, *Scripta Phil. Melanthonis ad Historiam … Chronicon Carionis*, CR 12:176–178; Gerald Strauss, 'The Course of German History: The Lutheran Interpretation', in *Enacting the Reformation in Germany: Essays on Institution and Reception* [Aldershot: Variorum, 1993], I:686).
[24] *Vorrede*, WA 53:571.15–17 (H-B, 264).
[25] *Vorrede*, WA 53:571.22 (H-B, 264).

> us now prepare ourselves against Muḥammad. But what can we say about matters that are still outside our knowledge? Therefore, it is of value for the learned to read the writings of the enemy in order to refute them more keenly, to cut them to pieces and to overturn them, in order that they might be able to bring some to safety, or certainly to fortify our people with more sturdy arguments.[26]

A Sermon for the Ecclesia *Facing the Claims of Islam*

While his preface to the Qur'ān was written in Latin and located in Theodor Bibliander's *Machumetis Saracenorum principis vita ac doctrina omnis*, which was intended primarily for a scholarly audience,[27] what Luther ultimately sought was to educate and equip the laity for whatever *Anfechtung* they might face if and when they encountered the claims of Islam. One of the reasons he had so firmly supported the publication of the Qur'ān was, he explained in his letter to the council of Basel, that he envisioned pastors using the Qur'ānic text as a reference for their sermons, 'for preaching to the people the abomination of Muḥammad.' As was the case with the publication of tracts on the Jewish religion, preaching on Islam would not only cause the people to grow more hostile towards the Turkish religion but it would also strengthen their own faith. That way, should they find themselves in Turkey someday they would be prepared and confident enough to proclaim and defend the gospel there.[28] Luther himself repeated this suggestion in his final series of sermons before his death on 18 February 1546. While he was in his hometown of Eisleben to aid in political negotiations between bickering German officials,[29] he preached a sermon on 31 January wherein he addressed, in addition to other non-Christian faiths, the Turks and their religion.[30]

The text for the sermon was the Gospel narrative of Jesus being awakened by his disciples during a storm on the Sea of Galilee where-

---

[26] *Vorrede*, WA 53:572.9–16 (H-B, 266).

[27] Some have even described it as the first Encyclopedia of Islam. See Pierre Manuel, 'Une Encylopédie de l'Islam: Le Recueil de Bibliander 1543 et 1550', *ETI* 21 (1946), 31–37; cf. Bobzin, *Der Koran*, 215.

[28] WA Br 10:162.39–47.

[29] See Brecht, *Luther*, 369–375.

[30] The sermon addressed 'Heiden, Türcken, jtziger Jüden und unchristen Glaube und Religion und Gottesdienst allzeit' (*Predigt*, WA 51:155.31). The Turks, however, figure prominently throughout (see 150.1, 39; 151.16, 37; 152.13).

upon Jesus calmed the winds and waves (Matthew 8:23–27). Applying the pericope to what he perceived as the current state of the church, Luther drew the following analogy: the boat in which Jesus slept was symbolic for the church; the sea, the life of the church; and the storm, the trials and tribulations of the church, which, he added, were ultimately orchestrated by the Devil. More specifically, the trials and tribulations represented the uncertainty or *Anfechtung* each member of the church might experience when faced by the claims of other religions.[31] And the resolution was as was always with Luther: 'Christ carries the ship with his gospel until the end through the sea and waves of the world and stormy gales of the Devil.'[32] Underneath the pastoral motif of this somewhat cluttered text, however, is a multi-tiered argument for the steadfast truth of the Christian faith.

The underlying theological argument of Luther's sermon is that God's nature can only be properly grasped through his revealed word contained in the Old and New Testament. While he certainly acknowledged that reason (*vernunfft*) was able to achieve a basic knowledge of God's attributes—for example, that he was the one, eternal Creator—to pry any further was beyond the scope of human faculties of reason. In fact, it was sorely misguided, especially when it attempted to find God where he chose to remain hidden. Even the wisest of heathens acknowledged this, he wrote, for 'God and his rule over the world is such a high, dark, and deeply hidden thing that nobody can fathom or understand it.'[33] Furthermore, while many such as the Muslim Turks correctly professed that God is one, eternal, and the living Creator of heaven and earth, they failed to truly worship him by rejecting what he had otherwise revealed about himself in his word.

> It is not enough and is still not called the correct worship of God such as when the Turks … boast that they worship the one God who created heaven and earth, etc. for you have not recognised his divine nature nor his will. That there is one God by whom all things were created you know from his works, that is, in you and all creatures. You may well see them, but you cannot externally recognise or experience him as he is himself, who he is, what kind of divine essence he has, and how he is disposed.[34]

---

[31] *Predigt*, WA 51:149.38, 155.22.

[32] *Predigt*, WA 51:155.29–30: 'Christus mus mit seinem Euangelio durch das Meer und wellen der Welt und sturmwinde des Teufels hindurch schiffen bis zum ende.'

[33] *Predigt*, WA 51:150.24–25: 'Das es so hoch, tunckel und tieff verborgen ding umb Gott und sein Regiment sey, das es niemand ergründen noch verstehen.'

[34] *Predigt*, WA 51:150.38–151.3: 'Ist nicht gnug und heisst noch nicht den rechten

Hence, a word from God or *sacra Scriptura* was vital to Luther for correct knowledge of God.

The text of Scripture was the final authority in all theological matters for Luther, but he knew full well that it could be interpreted a variety of ways, which lead to erroneous conclusions and false notions about God. This was especially the case with the Jews, for although they shared the same conviction that the Old Testament or at least the Torah was God's word, they professed a different creed and considered, along with the Turks, the Christian doctrine of ascribing 'more than one person in the eternal, divine nature' to be the 'highest abomination.'[35] And so, when Luther wrote that 'without his word one cannot know or say anything for certain of [God's] divine essence nor of his will'[36] what he meant by the word of God referred to more than the literal text of Scripture. It also meant the incarnate word of God in the person of Christ,[37] the reality of which, for Luther, was not an abstract religious idea but a brute fact of history.[38] Even more precisely, what Luther meant was the text of Scripture correctly interpreted through the lens of the incarnate word of God. Just as Christ was a mediator between God and humankind in Luther's soteriology, he also acted as a mediator—a hermeneutical lens—between the text of Scripture and the interpreter of Scripture.[39] Thus, even when the Old Testament Scriptures were

---

Gott angebetet, wie die Türcken … rhuemen, sie beten den einigen Gott an, der da Himel und Erden geschaffen etc. Denn damit hastu noch weder sein Goettlich wesen noch willen erkand. Das ein Gott sey, von dem alle ding geschaffen sein, das weissestu aus seinen wercken, das ist: an dir und allen Creaturn, die sihestu wol, Aber jn selbs, wer er sey, was fur ein goettlich Wesen, und wie er gesinnet sey, das kanstu nicht von auswendig ersehen noch erfaren.'

[35] *Predigt*, WA 51:150.13–15: 'Und sich an uns Christen uber die mass hoch ergern und fur die grösseste torheit, ja fur den höhesten Grewel halten, das wir mehr denn eine Person in dem ewigen, Göttlichen wesen setzen.'

[36] *Predigt*, WA 51:150.21–23: 'On sein Wort kan man weder von seinem Göttlichen wesen noch von seinem willen nichts gewisses sagen noch wissen.'

[37] *Predigt*, WA 51:150:27–28.

[38] Included in his view that the New Testament was divinely revealed Scripture was his conviction that it was also historically and factually accurate (See Michel Reu, *Luther and the Scriptures* [St. Louis: Concordia, 1944]). With that in mind, he was quite convinced that the pericope for his sermon demonstrated that Christ, who required sleep and other normal human activities, was true man and, at the same time, true God, which was evident in his ability to control nature (see *Predigt*, WA 51:148.32–149.38).

[39] Robert Preus explains the rationale for a christological hermeneutic of the Old Testament: 'All these theologians [from Luther through the era of classic Lutheran orthodoxy] believed in the continuity of truth: God does not change, and the same God who has revealed Himself in the life of Christ and in the New Testament was the God

read in light of the incarnational reality of Christ, for Luther, the triune nature of God's essence could be properly known and, most importantly, God's disposition towards humankind, especially as it was displayed through the sacrifice of his Son in the New Testament, could also be known. Only on this basis could God be properly conceived and worshipped.[40]

Luther based his polemic against Islam on this incarnational view of revelation. 'In this article the Christian faith distinguishes itself from all other human religions and faiths. It makes the others all false and useless, and it alone remains truthful and firm.'[41] The Muslim understanding of God goes no further than what human reason, unaided by revelation, can acknowledge, that is, that God is the creator of all things, that he is one and eternal, and that he should be obeyed. According to Luther, this failed to grasp the fullness of what God had revealed in his word. Therefore, the Turks' so-called worship of the Creator was more than inadequate. On account of their rejection of the deity of Christ and tri-unity of God, it was fundamentally and wilfully blasphemous.

> They do not want to listen to his word, which he has revealed concerning himself from the beginning of the world until now through the holy patriarchs and the prophets and finally through Christ himself and his apostles. They do not recognise him in this way, but they blaspheme and rage against him. They imagine a god, who has neither a Son nor a Holy Spirit in his divinity, and thus they claim that God is nothing more than a mere dream and they worship it. Indeed, they claim lies and blasphemies as knowledge of God because they presume, without divine revelation, that is, without the Holy Spirit, to know God and to come to him without a mediator (which must be God's own Son). They are therefore fundamentally without God. There is truly no other God than the one who is the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Both reveal

---

of the Old Testament. Therefore it is quite in order to read the theology of the New Testament, which is Christ's theology, into the Old, or, more accurately, to read the Old Testament in the light of the New. For the New Testament was really a commentary on the Old in terms of fulfilment. Moreover, Lutheran theology believed in the unity of Scripture and believed this unity to be Christological. Christ was and is the center of all Scripture, New and Old Testament alike, and all Scripture must be read and interpreted from a Christological perspective. This Christological unity of Scripture implies a doctrinal unity, and this idea of unity becomes a hermeneutical norm as the old Lutherans interpret the Scriptures' (*Theology of Post-Reformation Lutheranism* [St Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1972], 131–132).

[40] *Predigt*, WA 51:151.4–15.

[41] *Predigt*, WA 51:150.8–10: 'JN diesem Artikel scheidet sich nu der Christen Glaube von aller andern menschen Religion und glauben, Dieser machet die andern alle falsch und nichtig und bleibet allein warhafftig und bestendig.'

> themselves to the church through the Holy Spirit and work and rule in the hearts of the faithful. As 2 John 1 says, 'Whoever does not continue and remain in the doctrine of Christ, does not have God.' Christ says (John 5:23), 'Whoever does not honour the Son, does not honour the Father', or (John 14:6), 'No on comes to the Father except through me.'[42]

The most that could be said for Muslim Turks then, was that the God they claimed to worship was 'nothing more than a mere empty name or shadow of God.'[43] Not only that, though, they blasphemed the one, true God for when they declared that Christians are guilty of theological error for the doctrine of the deity of Christ, the reality was quite the reverse. Insisting that it is against the nature of God to have a son they slander and rage against the revealed, incarnate word of God.[44] This was tantamount to the Jews' claim that Christians really worship three gods, he added, for it likewise blasphemed God as he has revealed himself throughout history to the patriarchs, prophets and lastly through Christ and his apostles.[45] Christians should not be too offended, however, he concluded, for such 'lies and slander are

---

[42] *Predigt*, WA 51:151.21–36: 'Denn sie wollen sein wort nicht hoeren, so er von jm selb von anfang der Welt her, den heiligen Vetern und Propheten, und zu letzt durch Christum selb und seine Aposteln offenbaret, noch jn also erkennen, Sondern lestern und toben dawider, Malen jn einen Gott, der keinen Son noch heiligen Geist in seiner Gottheit habe, und also nichts denn einen ledigen trawm fur Gott halten und anbeten, ja luegen und lesterung fur Gottes erkentnis rhuemen, Weil sie sich unterstehen on goettliche Offenbarung, das ist: on den heiligen Geist, Gott zu erkennen, und on ein Mitler (welcher mus Gottes einiger Son sein) zu jm zu komen. Und also im grund on Gott sind, Denn es ist warhafftig kein ander Gott denn dieser, der da ist der Vater unsers HErrn Jhesu Christi, welche beide sich durch den heiligen Geist seiner Kirchen offenbaren und in den hertzen der Gleubigen wircken und regieren. Wie ij. Johan. j. sagt: "Wer nicht gleubt und bleibt in der lere Christi, der hat keinen Gott." Und Christus Johan. v. "Wer den Son nicht ehret, der ehret auch den Vater nicht." Jtem Joh. xiiij. "Niemand kompt zum Vater on durch Mich."'

[43] *Predigt*, WA 51:152.2–4: 'Haben sie auch an Gott (welchen sie rhuemen den Schepffer Himels und Erden) nicht mehr denn ein blossen ledigen namen oder schemen von Gott.'

[44] *Predigt*, WA 51:152.13–20.

[45] *Predigt*, WA 51:151:21–27: 'ALso auch die Jueden ergern sich zum hoechsten an uns und schreien, wir machen drey Goetter, als, die uber den einigen Gott auch der Jungfrawen son, als Gottes Son, und einen heiligen Geist anbeten, So sie doch wissen, und bekennen muessen, das wir des aus jrer eigen Schrifft, Mose und der Propheten klar Zeugnis haben und die selbe zum grund unsers Glaubens setzen, das Christus, Gottes Son, und der Geist Gottes als sondere unterschiedene personen des goettlichen Wesens genennet werden, Und also mit jrem liegen und lestern nicht uns, sondern Gott und die heilige Schrifft an liegen und lestern.'

not against us but lies against and blasphemies of God and the holy Scriptures.'[46]

After this bold polemic Luther shifted into an apologetic. Countering the claim that Islam was the religion of all the prophets from Adam and 'Noah and the messengers after him', Luther began, asserting, 'We can even prove that our faith is not new … but that it is the most ancient of all beliefs, which began at and has been preserved from the beginning of the world.'[47]

Reminiscent of his preface to the Qurʾān, he put forward the argument that the origins of the Christian religion could be found as far back in human history as the time of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. Pointing to Genesis 3:15 and, even more specifically, the promise that through Eve's offspring would come someone who would crush the head of the serpent, following traditional Christian Old Testament exegesis,[48] he asserted that this was the first announcement of the gospel (*ersten Euangelio*). Interpreted through the lens of the incarnate word he explained in detail that, through this promise, God 'made known and revealed' that a woman would give birth to a son. While the woman would be 'a normal human being', the son would be natural too insofar as he was the 'the woman's seed.' He also drew attention to the fact that a male parent was not mentioned in the promise, and based on what this woman's seed would accomplish it was clear, at least to Luther, that he would not be a normal child for he was to 'have the strength and power so that he could and would trample the head of the serpent.' The serpent was synonymous with the Devil, 'who brought the whole human race to death and eternal damnation through Adam and Eve', and the crushing of the serpent's head was yet another synonym for the destruction of the work of the Devil, for the promised seed of the woman would, through this act, 'redeem the human race from sin, God's wrath, and eternal death.' Since this promised seed, as God revealed, would perform such a supernatural deed befitting only God yet in the stead of humankind, it was clear to Luther that he must not only be a 'natural human' but also 'true God.' Moreover, because

---

[46] *Predigt*, WA 51:152.27–29: 'Und also mit jrem liegen und lestern nicht uns, sondern Gott und die heilige Schrifft an liegen und lestern.'

[47] *Predigt*, WA 51:152.30–32: 'Also koennen wir beweisen, das unser Glaube nicht new ist … Sondern der aller eltest glaube ist, der da angefangen und gewehret von anfang der Wellt her.'

[48] See, for example, Andrew Louth (ed.), *Ancient Commentary on Scripture: Genesis 1–11* (London: Fitzroy Dearborn, 2001), 88–91.

there was only one God, it was likewise clear that 'he must be the eternal Son of God.'[49] Upon hearing this, Luther asserted that 'when Adam and Eve, our first parents, came back again to grace in Paradise, after their pitiful fall, they began this faith in the Saviour, the Son of God.'[50] And from that point this promise remained the definitive doctrine of the church into the present. 'This article concerning Christ has been preached from the beginning of the world until now and has been believed by all the holy patriarchs and prophets, namely, that Christ would be both true man, as the woman's promised offspring, and also true God and Lord of all creatures, of sin, of the Devil, and death.'[51]

---

[49] *Predigt*, WA 51:152.38–153.21: 'Denn da ist von Gott selbs verkuendigt und offenbaret, das ein Weib solt einen Son tragen, welcher jr, des weibs samen, hiesse, also, das beide, das Weib ein Natuerlich mensch, und das Kind jr natuerlicher Son were, doch allein des weibs samen, das ist: nicht von noch durch einen Man geborn. Dieser solte die krafft und macht haben, das er der Schlangen (dem Teufel, der das gantz Menschlich geschlecht in Adam und Heva unter seine gewalt, in den tod und ewige verdamnis bracht) kuende und wuerde den kopff, das ist: seine gewalt zurtretten, und also das menschlich geschlecht von Suenden, Gottes zorn, ewigem Tod erloesen, Das muste je ein sonderliche Person sein und nicht allein mehr denn ein lauter Mensch von man und weib, sondern auch mehr denn ein Engel, weil der Teufel, dem er den Kopff zurtretten solt, selbs der hoehesten Englischen natur ist. ALs wolte Gott klar hie mit sagen: Jch wil jn lassen einen natuerlichen Menschen sein, von einem Weib geboren, doch nicht natuerlich oder gemeiner menschlicher weise empfangen von einem Man, Und der nicht allein menschliche Natur habe, wie du Adam und Heva, Denn also kuende er nicht die macht haben, die Schlangen mit fuessen zutretten, wie auch sie vor dem fall, wiewol sie on Suende geschaffen, die krafft und macht nicht hatten, Sondern er sol beide, natuerlicher Mensch und warhafftiger Gott, sein, als der, der HERR sey uber den Teufel und sein gantze macht und selbs das Werck thue, welches allein Goettlicher Maiestet werck und vermoegen ist, den Teufel, Tod, Suende und Helle zu tilgen. Nu mus er dennoch eine ander Person sein von dem, der da solches redet und solche Person, des Weibs samen und zutretter der Schlangen, verheisset. Und doch desselben goettlichen Wesens und von dem selben ewigen Gott, weil er nicht mehr denn ein einiger Gott ist, Darumb mus er ewiger Gottes Son sein.'

[50] *Predigt*, WA 51:152.32–34: 'Denn als Adam und Heva, unser erste Eltern, im Paradis wider zu gnaden kamen nach jrem jemerlichen fall, fiengen sie diesen Glauben an an [*sic*] den Heiland, den Son Gottes.' Drawing upon other sources of Luther's, Raymond Surburg wrote, speaking of faith qualitatively, 'For this reason Luther would not grant that there was any difference between the faith of Adam and Eve and the faith of New Testament Christians' ('Luther and the Christology of the Old Testament', *LSQ* 23:1 [1983], 36).

[51] *Predigt*, WA 51:153.22–26: 'Also ist dieser Artickel von Christo von anfang der Welt her gepredigt und gegleubet worden von allen heiligen Vetern, Propheten, das Christus beide warhafftiger Mensch sein wuerde, als des Weibs verheissener Samen, Und doch auch warhafftiger Gott und HErr aller Creaturn, der Suende, Teufels und Tods.' With reference to Luther's view that Christ was spoken of in the Old Testament, Bornkamm writes, 'All passages within the Old Testament … had only *one* meaning … to find not only the shadows of the New Testament in the Old Testament, but also to find the

Following his defence of the antiquity of the evangelical religion[52] Luther explained the origins of false religion all the while tying it into the central theme of his sermon: that the promise of the gospel has carried and will continue to carry the church through the multifarious assaults of the Devil. While the 'Christian church' or 'Adam and Eve from the beginning taught and preached this faith in the promised seed to their children and children's children and all humans up until the seventh patriarch Enoch', after 500 hundred years, Luther wrote, using the nautical metaphor of the sermon text, 'the Devil vigorously attacked the Christian church through Cain and his followers and rushed in and assaulted the little ship with the wind and waves of the sea.'[53] At this point, God ensured the preservation of the church against these storms, which manifested themselves in false doctrine,[54] by sending messengers. Following Enoch, he sent Noah, Abraham, the prophets, the kings (especially David), Hezekiah, Christ, and his apostles, 'all of whom preached this one faith against the Devil's raving madness and fury.'[55] This too, like the Fall of Adam and Eve as well

---

direct testimony, indeed, the work of Christ already in the Old Testament' (*Luther and the Old Testament*, 250).

[52] Against the charge that sixteenth-century evangelicalism was an innovation deviating from the apostolic church, see Luther's violent argument against the *newe Kirchen* of Rome in *Wider Hans Worst*, WA 51:478.27–485.24 (LW 41:194–256).

[53] *Predigt*, WA 51:153.39–154.2: 'Adam und Heva am anfang diesen Glauben an den verheissenen Samen jre Kinder und kinds Kinder und alle Menschen geleret und geprediget haben bis auff den siebenden patriarchen Henoch, in die fuenff hundert jar, da der Teufel durch Cain und seine Nachfolger der Christlichen kirchen hart zusetzet und auch mit seinen Winden und Meers wellen zu dem Schifflin einstuermet und schluge.' By identifying the origins of what he elsewhere called the 'false church' with Cain, Luther was clearly using Augustine's distinction between the two *civitates*. He acknowledged his use of the African bishop in *Wider Hans Worst*. 'For there are two kinds of churches stretching from the beginning of history to the end, which St. Augustine calls Cain and Abel' (WA 51:477.30–31 [LW 41:194]). Cf. Augustine, *The City of God*, 15:1, in *The Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1956), 2:285.

[54] *Predigt*, WA 51:153.20.

[55] *Predigt*, WA 51:154.3–13: 'Da schickt er einen andern Prediger Henoch, durch den er neben Adam bey den andern seine frome kindern und nachkomen die Lere erhielte und dem Teufel werete. Nach diesem schickte er Noha bis zur Sindflut, da die Kirche abermal zum hoechsten not leid, und alle Welt dahin fiel, bis auff acht menschen, dennoch ward sie durch diesen Son Gottes in denselbigen wenigen Personen erhalten und wider auffgericht. Nach diesem Noah und seinen kindern ward hernach Abraham erwecket, die kirche Gottes zu erhalten, Und folgends alle heilige Propheten, Koenige, als David, Ezechias, bis auff den HErrn Christum selbs und seine Apostel, welche alle diesen einigen Glauben wider des Teufels toben und wueten gepredigt haben.'

as the incarnation of God in Christ, was a matter of historical fact, according to Luther, and he claimed that this apocalyptic, though nevertheless very real, struggle between the true and false church or true religion and false religion had been going on for 5,000 years.[56]

Luther was convinced that his elucidation of the primeval origins of the evangelical religion would reap practical benefits among Christians.[57] He wrote, it is 'evident that we, who are now at the end, praise God and believe exactly the same and even preach the same as Adam, Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, and all the patriarchs and prophets have believed and preached.'[58] It was therefore equally clear that all the non-Christian religions were mere innovations,[59] Islam being the most recent. Christianity, on the other hand, was not only the oldest but also the only religion revealed by God to humankind. On this basis he instructed those assembled at St. Andrew's church in Eisleben and his later readers that one could rest confident against any bouts of *Anfechtung* and know that their faith was true and all others, regardless of external appearances and claims to the contrary, were ultimately attempts of the Devil to lead the members of the true church astray.

Muḥammad's Innovation and the Antiquity of the Christian Religion

Luther's charge that Islam was an invention of Muḥammad clearly rested upon a host of assumptions quite unacceptable from a Muslim perspective. In fact, his central thesis that Islam was an invention of Muḥammad would quickly be responded to in kind by any learned orthodox Muslim. For example, perhaps the greatest of the medieval Islamic apologists, Ibn Taymiyya (1263–1328), wrote, 'The false religion of Christians is nothing but an innovated religion which they

[56] *Predigt*, WA 51:154.32. In his *Supputatio Annorum Mundi* (1541/5), Luther had calculated, with the help of other chronicles, that in 1540 the world was 5,500 years old. Minus the 500 hundred years from creation to Cain, 5,000 years, more or less, had indeed passed, according to Luther's calculations, since the Devil began his assault on the church. It would only be a little while longer until the struggle would cease for, while he never offered any predictions, he was quite sure that the world would come to an end before it reached 6,000 years of age. See WA 53:22–24.

[57] *Predigt*, WA 51:154.14.

[58] *Predigt*, WA 51:155.26–28: 'Und findet sich, das wir, Gott lob, jtzt am ende eben also gleuben und eben dasselb predigen, wie Adam, Abel, Henoch, Noah, Abraham und alle Veter und Propheten gegleubt und gepredigt haben.'

[59] *Predigt*, WA 51:155.31–37.

invented after the time of Christ and by which they changed the religion of Christ.'[60] Such a charge, likewise, rests upon presumptions that are objectionable from a Christian point of view, not the least the corruption of the *Tawrā*, *Zabūr*, and *Injīl* and the consequent denial of the deity of Christ. Nevertheless, Luther's arguments would have certainly been accepted in sixteenth-century Germany, and, while his hopes that they could be used to convert Turkish Muslims were too optimistic, he did expose fundamental theological differences that exist between Islam and Christianity.

First, although both Genesis and the Qur'ān contain narratives of a fall of Adam and Eve, its nature and ramifications and thus the anthropology of Islam and Christianity are vastly different. For Luther, even though Adam and Eve were created inherently righteous 'as soon as they ate from the forbidden tree and sinned, that is, as soon this original righteousness passed and was ruined, then evil desires began to be aroused and grow in them, then they were inclined to haughtiness, unchastity, lust of the flesh and all sins.'[61] As a result, their unrighteousness and concupiscence was both transmitted and reckoned to all subsequent generations.[62] The Qur'ān depicts the result of the fall quite differently. George Anawati explains, 'Islam admits an original fall for Adam and Eve, our first parents, created at first in a state of innocence. But this fall has had only personal consequences. Moreover, their fault has been forgiven. The idea of an original sin transmitted by Adam to his descendants is absolutely opposed to the teaching of Islam.'[63] Adam was pardoned and, in fact, made the first prophet.[64] Moreover, both he and Eve retained their original state of righteousness. On account of this teaching, Islam 'has cut off, once and for all, the possibility of any development of a teaching of inherited sin, for Adam's fall has no immediate consequences for later generations.'[65] So, to sum up: for Christianity, especially in its reformational evangelical formulation, but also the whole of the western Christian tradition, humans are by nature

---

[60] Thomas Michel, *A Muslim Theologian's Response to Christianity: Ibn Taymiyya's Al-Jawab Al-Sahih* (Delmar: Caravan Books, 1984), 143.

[61] *Auslegung des Euangelions*, WA 17/2:283.13–17 (trans. slightly modified from Lohse, *Luther's Theology*, 252).

[62] See Lohse, *Luther's Theology*, 251–253.

[63] George Anawati, 'La Notion de "Péché Originel" existe-t-elle dans l'Islam?' *SI* 31 (1970), 39.

[64] See Q 2:37.

[65] Johan Bouman, *Gott und Mensch im Koran* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1977), 15; cf. Anawati, 'La Notion de "Péché Originel"', 32.

sinful. 'This sin is not committed, as are all other sins; rather it *is*. It lives and commits all sins and is the real essential sin which does not sin for an hour or for a while; rather no matter where or how long a person lives, this sin is there also.'[66] Human beings are so damaged and disfigured by the sin and guilt passed onto them and reckoned to them through the fall of the first parents that instead of striving with God they are always seeking to set themselves in place of God. The nature of humankind is much different in Islam. Not only are humans by nature righteous but also they never really lose this inherent condition so long as they strive to live according to God's law.

These two radically different understandings of the nature of humankind directly affect Christian and Islamic soteriology. Because there is no inherited sin, guilt, or unrighteousness in Islam there is no need for a mediator to restore or impute righteousness to humankind. Hence, the second major difference between Islam and Christianity, as Luther rightly noted, is that a mediator is necessary in Christian theology. Although Luther spoke of the 'necessity' of a redeemer in his Epiphany sermon, the issue was not simply a matter of deductive reasoning. Rather, Luther asserted the necessity of redemption by means of a propitiatory sacrifice of a divine, yet also fully human, Saviour on account of the promise given to Adam and Eve immediately after their disobedience. This promise of a divine-human Saviour and also justification through faith in this promise, according to Luther, are found throughout the text of the Old Testament.[67] The only difference between the teachings of the New Testament and the Old was simply a matter of elucidation or clarification. 'The New Testament is nothing but a revelation of the Old; it is as if somebody had a sealed letter and later on broke it open.'[68]

A much different picture of humankind and their relationship with God after the fall emerges in the Qur'ān. In Luther's theology, humankind was rendered incapable of obtaining the righteousness required for eternal life. Instead, humans are only reckoned as righteous in the sight of God when they receive Christ's righteousness through the medium of faith. According to the Qur'ān, humans retain the nature in which God created them and so do not need any sort of intermediary in the

---

[66] *Euangelium am Newenn Jars tage. Luce. ij*, WA 10/1:508.20–509.4 (LW 52:152).

[67] See Surburg, 'The Christology of the Old Testament', 31–86.

[68] *Das Euangelium ynn der hohe Christmeß auß S. Johanne am ersten Capitel*, WA 10/1:181.24–182.1 (LW 52:41).

soteriological sense.[69] Human beings, however, do need God's revelation. Although humans are inherently righteous they still need guidance from God for inadequacies in cognitive and rational faculties, particularly in relation to ethical and legal imperatives.[70] Luther's charge that although Muslims believe in God they are still 'fundamentally without God' shows just how different the Islamic and Christian understanding of revelation is. Whereas in Islam it is 'purely ideational', in Christian theology it is ultimately incarnational.[71] And for Luther the incarnation was not merely soteriological but also epistemological.[72] In his Galatians commentary he wrote,

> Paul is in the habit of linking together Jesus Christ and God the Father so frequently: he wants to teach us the Christian religion, which does not begin at the very top, as all other religions do, but at the very bottom. Paul commands us to ascend on the ladder of Jacob, at the top of which God himself is resting, and the feet of which touch the earth next to the head of Jacob (Genesis 28:12f.). Therefore if you would think or treat of your salvation, you must stop speculating about the majesty of God; you must forget all thoughts of good works, tradition, philosophy, and even the divine Law. Hasten to the stable and the lap of the mother and apprehend this infant Son of the Virgin. Look at him being born, nursed, and growing up, walking among men, teaching, dying, returning from the dead and being exalted above all the heavens, in possession of power over all. In this way you can cause the sun to dispel the clouds and can avoid all fear and all errors too. And this view of God will keep you on the right path.[73]

Although Luther was well aware of the status of the Qur'ān as God's revealed word amidst Muslims, not only did he think that he had shown previously in *Verlegung*[74] that it could not be God's word but, here, his argument, addressing a Christian audience, is that the revelation of God through his son was superior. An incarnate word revealed the complex nature of the Godhead, but most importantly, for Luther,

---

[69] See Q 30:30; cf. Bouman, *Gott und Mensch*, 15.

[70] Ismaʿil al-Faruqi, 'A Comparison of the Islamic and Christian Approaches to Hebrew Scripture', *JBR* 31 (1963), 286; Zafar Ansari, 'Some Reflections on Islamic Bases for Dialogue with Jews and Christians', *JES* 14:3 (1977), 435.

[71] Ansari, 'Some Reflections on Islamic Bases', 435.

[72] Zöckler, *Geschichte*, 309–310; John W. Montgomery, 'The Apologetic Thrust of Lutheran Theology', *LSQ* 11:1 (1970), 21–23; Steven Hein, 'Reason and the Two Kingdoms: An Essay in Luther's Thought', *The Springfielder* 36:2 (1972), 143–146.

[73] *Annotationes Martini Lutheri In Epistolam Pauli ad Galatas*, WA 40/1:79.7–80.1 (LW 26:30).

[74] *Vorrede*, WA 53:570.24–27.

through both the words and deeds of Christ (especially his death and resurrection), human beings knew for certain that God had not left them to their own sinful devices. Instead, God dealt with the sinful disposition as well as the sinful deeds of humankind himself manifestly through the cross.

It was on the prophecies of Christ in the Old Testament and their ultimate fulfilment in the incarnation, death, and resurrection of Jesus, as recorded by the Gospel writers, then, that Luther based his defence of the Christian faith. Christianity, defined as faith in the crushing of the catastrophic consequences of the fall through the seed of a woman, namely Mary and her son Jesus, was not a first century creation, according to Luther, but it was also the primordial religion. When Luther read the Old Testament as a record of history he found prophecies of Christ everywhere; thus he claimed that Christianity was preached as far back as the time of Noah, even to the time of Adam. He was, of course, not the first to explain the veracity of Christianity in this manner. In the second century Justin Martyr (c. 120–165) and Irenaeus of Lyons (c. 135–202) defended Christianity by appealing to its primeval roots.[75] And, of course, it could also be argued that the Apostle Paul set forth the case for Christianity this way in passages like Romans 5:12–14 and 16:20.

Such a defence of Christianity, of course, presumes the historical and textual reliability of the Bible. Although Luther thought he had already demonstrated the charge of *taḥrīf* to be untenable,[76] basing his argument solely from the Qurʾān, he had much to learn, for there were already many different defences put forth by Muslim apologists already by the sixteenth century that still demanded an answer. One thinks first of Ibn Taymiyya[77] but also of Ibn Ḥazm's (994–1064) 'devastating attack on the integrity of the Bible', based on his perception of contradictions and spurious narratives of the Old Testament and the four Gospels,[78] as well as pseudo-al-Ghazālī's (1058–1111) attempt to disprove, from the

[75] Justin Martyr, *Dialogue with Trypho the Jew*, 100; Irenaeus of Lyons, *Against the Heresies*, 3:23.7, 5:21.1.

[76] See pages 184–186 above.

[77] See especially Michel, *Ibn Taymiyya's Al-Jawab*, 210–254.

[78] See Sweetman's (*Islam*, 178–262) paraphrase of the first volume in ibn Ḥazm's *Al-Faṣl fi al-Milal wa al-Aḥwāʾ wa al-Niḥal*. Also see Thomas Burman (trans.), 'On the Inconsistencies of the Four Gospels. Ibn Ḥazm, *Al-Fasl al-milal*', in Olivia. R. Constable (ed.), *Medieval Iberia: Readings from Christian, Muslim, and Jewish Sources* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1997), 81–83; Theodore Pulcini, *Exegesis as Polemical Discourse: Ibn Ḥazm on Jewish and Christian Scriptures* (Atlanta: Scholar's Press, 1998),

Gospels, that Christ ever ascribed to himself a divine nature.[79] Thus, Luther's apologetic would have proved impotent before a Muslim audience.

But even though Luther was hopelessly naïve in his desire to convert Muslims, at least through the arguments he passed on to his readers, what he did do well is present a coherent case for the Christian faith from the oldest Scriptures. If a Christian, for example, in Luther's context a captive of the Turks, was faced with the overwhelming claims of Islam—that it alone was the primordial religion and Christianity was but a mere innovation introduced after Christ through the altering of the meaning and text of the Gospel—then he (or she) would be able to stand firm with Adam, Noah, Abraham, and the rest of the Old Testament believers in the forthcoming divine messenger of God along with the Apostles and the rest of the New Testament evangelical catholic church in the credibility of their own faith.

Luther's primary purpose in responding to the theology of the Qur'ān was to ensure that the gospel would be preserved as the church now found itself confronted by Islam. The world was at the 'extreme end of the ages'[80] and, as he had originally through Cain but most recently the papists and the Jews, the Devil was also currently seeking to undermine the ancient church through the 'invention of Muḥammad.'

While Luther was sure that the world was nearing its end, he refused to let down his defences for the sake of posterity. In 1544 he wrote, 'we know that the Devil does not sleep but is always roaring against us. So it is not only necessary for us to be certain of the true doctrine of the gospel, but that our descendants may have something of the truth and certainty of religion.'[81] So Luther, in both his preface to the Qur'ān and one of his final sermons provided a basis from which his readers and those who heard him preach would find their faith greatly strengthened.

97–128; Ghulam Haider Aasi, *Muslim Understanding of Other Religions: A Study of Ibn Ḥazm's* Kitāb al-Faṣl fi al-Milal wa al-Aḥwā' wa al-Niḥal (Adam Publishers, 2004), 115–187.

[79] See Sweetman's (*Islam*, 262–308) paraphrase of what is now considered to be a pseudonymous work entitled *Al-Radd al-Ǧamīl li-Ilāhiyyat 'Īsā bi-Ṣarīh al-Inǧīl*. For a German translation, see Franz-Elmar Wilms (trans.), *Al-Ghazalis Schrift wider die Gottheit Jesu* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1966).

[80] *Vorrede*, WA 53:570.20.

[81] *Promotionsdisputation*, WA 39/2:266.9–13, trans. Lohse, in *Luther's Theology*, 254n35.

Luther responded to the Qur'ānic claim that Islam was the religion revealed by God through his messengers by demonstrating, from what would have been conceived as the most reliable record of early human history, that faith in Christ and the gospel was actually the most ancient faith. Although a Muslim would hardly have found his arguments convincing, Luther would have accomplished his goal of encouraging his readers to remain firm in the doctrine and promise delivered to the first parents of humankind, as preserved in the Scriptures, and made manifest in the person and work of Christ. This attack on Islam, as a theological innovation, and defence of the veracity of Christianity based upon the aboriginal revelation of the gospel is without precedent in the late medieval anti-Islamic polemical canon. Not only does it represent a new approach to responding to Islam,[82] but, by also exposing the profound theological differences between the two religions, it also set the stage for the most basic apologetic dilemma in Muslim-Christian dialogue, the reliability of the Scriptures, which would be taken up by the next generation of Christian apologists.[83]

[82] Nicholas of Cusa did, however, argue from the promise given to Abraham. Addressing a Muslim audience, he wrote, 'You have no part in the inheritance of Abraham, because you are begotten from the handmaiden Agar and are adversaries of the spirit, even as the flesh is always opposed to the spirit. And you cannot be blessed in the offspring of Abraham unless by faith you become Abraham's descendants in spirit. Thereupon you will be able to obtain the promise-of-blessing in Christ, who is the goal and fulfilment of the promise' (*CrA*, 1080).

[83] For example, see Montgomery, 'The Apologetic Thrust', 25–26 and Preus, *Post-Reformation Lutheranism*, 1:300–309 for descriptions of later Lutheranism's attempts to provide proof for the authority and authenticity of the Judeo-Christian Scriptures. See also and especially the many editions of the Arminian and 'father of modern apologetics', Hugo Grotius' chapters on 'Muḥammadanism' and the 'authority of the New Testament' in his *De veritate religionis Christianae*.

CONCLUSION

The impetus behind Martin Luther's interest in Islam and Ottoman culture was apologetical. The farther the Turks pushed into Hungary towards Germany the more he sensed a need to prepare Christians for contact with Muslims. Thus, he began from the earliest of his tracts on the Turkish war until one of his final sermons to instruct Christians in what to think about and how to approach Islam.

Vom kriege widder die Türcken analysed what Luther thought was basic Muslim ideology in relation to the three fundamental spheres of human existence—the three estates. He argued that, by rejecting the final revelatory and redemptive act of God in the person and work of Christ, Islam destroyed the prospect for true religious life, for Muḥammad severed the relationship human beings had with God through the gospel of Christ by imposing upon them a new legal religion. Islam also ruined the political estate by propelling nations under its sway against other nations in order to bring them within the domain of *Mahomets reich*. And finally, just as it disrupted peaceful relations between different nations, it also severely disfigured the most natural and basic unit of human relationships—marriage—by permitting divorce in accordance with the whims of men. The consequence of all this, as Luther saw it, was the supplanting of the divine order in creation for false religion, chaotic foreign relations, and the ruination of true marriage. All this was indicative of the work of the Devil, for he too sought to obliterate the work of God in creation. Luther therefore concluded that the Turks and their religion, politico-imperial policy, and domestic ethics were really masks behind which the Devil was attempting to destroy humankind.

Vom kriege's critical evaluation of Islam was more than a critique, though, for it also served to inform Christians of the malignant nature of the Turkish Islamic threat. Consequently, it was also meant to convince the hearts and minds of its readers of this fact so that they too, like Luther, would by no means be indifferent to it, for civilization built in part upon the foundation of Christianity was at stake.

Where western civilization was at its greatest peril during Luther's lifetime was at the siege on Vienna. News of the damage and lives lost

during the battle coupled with reports of conversions to Islam amongst Christian slaves of the Turks compelled Luther, in his *Eine Heerpredigt widder den Türcken*, to begin offering specific advice for Christian prisoners of war living in the domain of Islam. The counsel that he gave sought to provide his readers with answers to questions raised and doubts caused by the alluring phenomena of Islam, which he thought were inevitable while living amongst the Turks. In short, Luther's counsel was informed by his teaching on the proper conception of how humans could stand before God (*coram Deo*), even in the midst of a *Mahometisch reich*, assured of their salvation. Only the crucified Christ and the righteousness one attained through faith in him, he argued, could provide such a firm foundation against the *Anfechtung* caused by Islam. Luther also provided instruction on how Christians should behave in a Muslim society. His advice was informed by his understanding of the necessity of the Christian pursuit of civil righteousness in and before the eyes of the world (*coram mundo*). Luther argued that Christians especially were duty bound to serve their authorities irrespective of their religion and nationality. This, however, should never be construed as an obligation for one's salvation—for that was already accomplished through Christ—but rather the basic responsibility of humans living in the secular realm.

Luther's advice in *Eine Heerpredigt* was, interestingly, not so much polemical. Instead, it was existential and apologetical. He offered it in order to provide Christians with the means to justify, at least in their own minds, the unique and superior claims of Christianity as well as to encourage them in their Christian life even though they were now meant to exist in a Muslim society.

After the shock of the siege on Vienna wore off, the threat of Christian captivity at the hands of the Turks subsided for nearly a decade. The pressures of Ottoman imperialism were felt again, however, in the early 1540s when Hungary was annexed and incorporated into the domain of Islam. Luther was nevertheless ready to respond once more. Only this time, having recently read a Latin translation of the Qurʾān, he considered himself qualified to engage Islam much more polemically than he had previously done. He did so by embracing the methodology and tactics of Riccoldo da Monte di Croce's *Confutatio Alcorani*, translating the old polemical apologetic into German. Following Riccoldo he attacked the Qurʾān as a legitimate source of revelation and religious authority. Confident that he had exposed it to be a product of Muḥammad's fraudulent Satan-inspired ministry, he then, interestingly,

began to explicate Christian doctrines such as the Trinity and deity of Christ from it. He even suggested that the passages he thought were open to a Christian interpretation were implanted by the Holy Spirit.

Luther's intentions behind the *Verlegung des Alcoran* were twofold. First, by attacking the legitimacy of the Qurʾān he thought that he had exposed its errors, and thus it would prove beneficial to its readers by strengthening their resolve against the Muslim religion. Second, he thought his attack—and especially his demonstration of key Christian doctrines and exhortations to consider the claims of the Christian Scriptures concerning Christ—could be used by Christians to approach Muslims should the opportunity present itself.

For Luther, the apologetic enterprise always served practical ends. Thus, he urged learned Christians to familiarise themselves with the Qurʾān so that they too could contribute to the task of 'refuting the faith of Muḥammad' and 'defending the Christian faith.' His letter to the Council of Basel in support of the publication of the Qurʾān as well as the preface that he contributed to the project contained strong appeals in behalf of this endeavour. Luther himself made one more contribution to the cause in a sermon less than a month before he died. First, he argued for the superiority of Christianity on the basis of the revelation given not just in word—that is, in Scripture—but also in the person of Jesus Christ. While Islam too claimed to have the word of God in the Qurʾān, Luther argued that it was wholly deficient, for although Muslims claimed that it was a revelatory word it lacked any substantive information concerning God's nature and disposition towards humanity. The Bible interpreted through the even more distinct and full disclosure of God in His Son Christ was, according to Luther, by far superior to the alleged revelation given to Muḥammad. It provided further details concerning the nature of God and, most importantly, his disposition towards humankind. Second, against the Qurʾān's call for a return to the universal and ancient faith of Islam—the religion of Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses, David, Christ, and all the other prophets—he argued that Christianity—and not Islam—was really the religion of the prophets. Tracing the doctrine of original sin and the promise of Christ as the redeemer of humankind all the way back to Adam and Eve, he 'proved' (*beweisen*) to his German Christian audience that (evangelical) Christianity, that is, mere faith in Christ for redemption from sin, was in fact the historic revealed religion.

In addition to the particular theological undercurrents of his apologetics, Luther's multi-faceted approach to Islam was unique in many

respects. While he could be just as vituperative and polemical as Riccoldo da Monte di Croce and, to some extent, Nicholas of Cusa, he never went so far as Alfonso de Espina and even Dionysius the Carthusian in using polemics as propaganda for a crusade (for the crusade was anathema to Luther). But whereas the medieval writers were focused on refuting Islam in order to bring about the conversion of Muslims, Luther's intentions were primarily directed at strengthening the faith of Christians, for he feared their propensity towards infidelity as much as if not more than he feared the Muslim infidel. He wanted to ensure, first, that Christians were convinced of the malignancy of the Turkish-Islamic threat. Secondly, for those upset by various forms of temptation and doubt caused by the monolithic appearances of the Ottomans and their religion he sought to convince them of the superiority of Christ over Muḥammad and Christianity over Islam. Only after Christians were assured of this did he envision his arguments being directed at Turkish Muslims. And even then he was convinced that a silent witness to the gospel through righteous behaviour was more effective than polemical argumentation, particularly in a Muslim context.

Luther's assessment of the nature of the Ottoman Empire and perceptions of Islam were similar to the medieval apocalyptic perceptions displayed in the biblical prognostications of Joachim of Fiore, Johann Hilten, and others, but even though he thought that the Turks were completely repugnant servants of the Devil he still, like Georgius de Hungaria, sought to accurately relate information on Muslim religion and culture. Quite unlike Georgius and probably the overwhelming majority of medieval and early modern thinkers, however, Luther was convinced that, because of his two-kingdom doctrine, Christians could and should, if God led them to, live alongside Muslims in the domain of the Ottomans. Not only were they to live with them, according to Luther. They were also obliged to submit to the Muslim authorities and to work diligently for them, for even they, so long as they did not infringe upon the rights of the conscience, held a divinely appointed position of authority.

Luther's ruminations over the plight of Christians enslaved in Turkey or other Muslim territories led him to an even more unique opinion on Christian missions. Whereas Christian apologists from Riccoldo to Raymond Llull to Theodor Bibliander thought that missionaries should be sent from the outside into the Muslim world (with Llull, Alfonso, and Dionysius convinced that the crusade could help facilitate the endeav-

our), Luther thought that missionary work amongst Muslims should take place from within, through Christians living amongst Muslim populations.

Luther's various engagements with Islam demonstrate that his approach was primarily theological rather than philosophical and rationalistic like Llull and the Reformer's contemporary Guillame Postel. His three-estate analysis and existential apologetic drawn from the principles of his doctrine of the two kingdoms and teaching on the two kinds of righteousness were distinctively 'Lutheran.' Even though he ventured away from his own somewhat idiosyncratic approach when he assimilated the methodology of the Dominican scholastic apologetic tradition he still, particularly with his additions and amendments to the text, gave it a (German) Lutheran flavour. His final approach, the apology for the historical veracity and continuity of the Christian church from the earliest revelation of God to humankind, while not entirely new (for the second century Christian apologists used the same approach as they argued against the Jews) was still uniquely adopted by Luther for the context of debate with Islam.

While Luther reached many of the same conclusions drawn by the medieval thinkers and his own contemporaries, the way he arrived at his conclusions and approached Islam was quite different. As such, and especially considering his profound influence upon the history of Christian thought since the sixteenth century, he warrants inclusion in the rich western tradition of responding to Islam.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Primary Sources: Martin Luther

Die Bekenntnisschriften der evangelisch-lutherischen Kirchen, ed. Hans Lietzmann, Heinrich Bornkamm, Hans Volz, and ErnstWolf (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 1952).

The Church Comes from All Nations: Luther Texts on Mission, trans. Klaus Detlev Schulz and Daniel Thies (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2003).

D. Martin Luthers Werke, 69 vols. (Weimar: Böhlau, 1883–2001).

D. Martin Luthers Werke: Briefwechsel, 18 vols. (Weimar: Böhlau, 1930–1985).

D. Martin Luthers Werke: Deutsche Bibel, 12 vols. (Weimar: Böhlau, 1906–1961).

D. Martin Luthers Werke: Tischreden, 6 vols. (Weimar: Böhlau, 1912–1921).

Luther's Correspondence and Other Contemporary Letters, 2 vols., trans. Henry Preserved Smith and Charles Jacobs (Philadelphia: Lutheran Publication Society, 1918).

Luther's Works, 55 vols. (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House and Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1955–1986).

Verlegung des Alcoran, in Johannes Ehmann (ed.), *Corpus Islamo-Christianum*, vol. 6. (Würzburg: Echter and Altenberge: Oros, 1999).

Primary Sources: Medieval and Early Modern

Alfonso de Espina, *Fortalicium fidei contra iudeos saracenos alios[que] christianae fidei inimicos* (Nürnberg: Koberger, 1494).

Anonymous, *Liber denudationis sive ostensionis aut patefaciens*, in Thomas Burman (trans.), *Religious Polemic and the Intellectual Tradition of the Mozarabs, c. 1050–1200* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1994), 215–388.

———, *Ein spruch wie man dem Thürcken macht widerstehen auch wie sich die Christen solcher nott sollen halten* (n.p., 1531).

———, *Ausz Ratschlage Herren Erasmi von Roterdam die Türcken zubekriegen Der ursprung undd alle geschicthen der selbigen gegen Römische Keyser unnd gemeyne Christenheit vo anbegin des türckischen namenn nach der kürtze new verteutscht* (n.p., 1530).

———, *Ain anschlag wie man dem Türcke widerstand thun mag und durch gantz christenhait baide von gaistliche un weltliche stant geleyche bürde getrage würde on beschwernis mit ordenung der müntz gar schön zulesen yetz new gedruckt* (n.p., 1522).

Arnold von Harff, *The Pilgrimage of Arnold von Harff*, trans. and ed. M. Letts (London: Hakluyt Society, 1946).

Augustine, *City of God*, in Philip Schaff (ed.), *The Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church*, vol. 2 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1956).

Bernhard von Breydenbach, *Peregrinatio in Terram Sanctam* (Speyer: Drach, 1502).
Bibliander, Theodor (ed.), *Machumetis Sarracenorum principis vita ac doctrina omnis, quam & Ismahelitarum lex, & Alcoranum dicitur* (Basel: J. Oporinus, 1543).
———, *Ad nominis Christiani socios consultatio, qua nam ratione Turcarum dira potentia repelli possit ac debeat a populo Christiano* (Basel: Brylinger, 1542).
Dionysius Carthusianus, *Alchoran. Das ist des Mahometischen Gesatzbuchs und Türckischen Aberglauben ynnhalt, und ablänung* (Strassbourg: H. Schott, 1540).
———, *Contra Alchoranum & sectam Machometicam* (Köln: Quentel, 1533).
Erasmus, *Enchiridion militis christiani*, in *Collected Works of Erasmus*, vol. 66 (London: University of Toronto Press, 1988).
Franck, Sebastian, 'A Letter to John Campanus', in George H. Williams (ed.), *Spiritual and Anabaptist Writers* (London: SCM, 1952), 147–162.
———, *Chronica unnd Beschreibung der Türckey mit yhrem begriff, ynnhalt, provincien, völckern, ankunfft, kriege, reysen, glauben, religionen, gesatzen, sytten, geperde, weis, regimente, frümkeyt, undd bossheiten* (Nürnberg: Peypus, 1530).
Georgijevic, Bartholomew, *Von der Türcken gebreuchen, gewonheyten und Ceremonien* (Nürnberg: Buldemunde, 1545).
Georgius de Hungaria, *Tractatus de Moribus, Condictionibus et Nequicia Turcorum-Traktat über die Sitten, die Lebensverhältnisse und die Arglist der Türken (1481)*, ed. and trans. Reinhard Klockow (Köln: Böhlau, 1993).
———, *Libellus de Ritu et Moribus Turcorum* (Wittenberg: Hans Lufft, 1530).
Giovio, Paolo, *Ursprung des Turkischen Reichs bis auff den itzigen Solyman*, trans. Justus Jonas (Augsburg: Steiner, 1538).
———, *Turcicarum rerum commentarius*, trans. Francisco Negri (Wittenberg: Klug, 1537).
Greff, Joachim, *Vermanung an gantze Deudsche Nation, wider den Türckischen Tyrannen, Sampt einem Gebet zu Gott, Umb errettunge von demselben Erbfeinde* (Wittenberg: Kreutzer, 1541).
Hartmuth von Cronberg, *Die Schriften Hartmuths von Cronberg*, ed. Eduard Kück (Halle: Niemeyer, 1899).
Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, in Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson (eds.), *Ante Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church*, vol. 1 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987), 315–567.
Jonas, Justus, *Das sibende Capitel Danielis, von des Türcken Gottes lesterung und schrecklicher morderey* (Wittenberg: Hans Lufft, 1530).
Justin Martyr, *Dialogue with Trypho the Jew*, in Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson (eds.), *Ante-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church*, vol. 1 (Grand Rapids Eerdmans, 1987), 194–270.
Knaust, Heinrich, *Von geringem herkommen schentlichern leben schmehlichem ende des Türckischen abgots Machomets und seiner verdamlichen und Gotteslesterischent Ler allen fromen Christen zu disen geferlichen Zeiten zur Sterckung unnd trost im glauben an Jesum Christum* (Berlin: Weisen, 1542).
Kuripecic, Benedict, *Ein Disputation oder Gesprech zwayer Stalbuben So mit küniglicher Maye. Botschafft bey dem Türckischen Keyser zu Constantinopel gewesen Dieweil sy allda in jhrer beherbergung vo dem Türcken verspert beschehen Darinen alle gewonheiten Brauch Glaub Ordnung unnd Lands art der Türckey gemelt wirdt* (Augsburg: Steiner, 1531).

Melanchthon, Philip, *Corpus Reformatorum: Philippi Melanthonis opera quae supersunt omnia*, 28 vols. (Halle: Schwetke, 1834–1860).

Müntzer, Thomas, 'To Frederick the Wise. Allstedt, 3 August 1524,' in Peter Matheson (trans. and ed.), *The Collected Works of Thomas Müntzer* (Edinburg: T & T Clark, 1988), 110–113.

Nicholas of Cusa, *Cribratio Alkorani*, in Jasper Hopkins (trans. and ed.), *Nicholas of Cusa's De Pace Fidei and Cribratio Alkorani*, 2nd edn. (Minneapolis: Arthur J. Banning Press, 1994); available from www.cla.umn.edu/sites/jhopkins.

Palaiologos, Manuel, *Dialogue mit einem Muslim*, 3 vols., trans. and ed. Karl Förstel (Würzburg: Echter and Altenberge: Oros, 1995).

Postel, Guillame, *De orbis terrae concordia* (Basel: Oporinus, 1544).

———, *Alcorani seu legis Mahometi et Euangelistarum concordiae liber, in quo de calamitatibus orbi Christiano imminentibus tractatur* (Paris: Petrus Gromorsus, 1543).

Riccoldo da Monte di Croce, *Contra legem Sarracenorum*, in Jean-Marie Mérigoux, (ed.), 'L'ouvrage d'un frère prêcheur florentin en Orient à la fin du XIIIe siècle. Le *Contra legem Sarracenorum* de Riccoldo da Monte di Croce', *Fede e controversia nel '300 e '500. MD 15* (1986), 60–144.

———, *Confutatio Alcorani seu legis Saracenorum, ex graeco nuper in latinum traducta*, trans. Bartholomaeus Picenus de Montearduo in *D. Martin Luthers Werk*, vol. 53 (Weimar: Bohlau, 1920), 273–387.

Schiltberger, Johann, *The Bondage and Travels of Johann Schiltberger, a Native of Bavaria, in Europe, Asia and Africa, 1396–1427*, trans. J. Buchan Telfer (London: Hakluyt Society, 1879).

Schweigger, Salomon, *Zum Hofe des türkischen Sultans*, ed. Heidi Stein (Leipzig: Hans Jörg Sittauer, 1986).

———, *Alcoranus Mahometicus, das ist: Der Türcken Alcoran, Religion und Aberglauben, in die Italienische: jetzt aber inn die teutsche Sprach gebraucht* (Nürnberg: Simon Halbmaier, 1616).

Stern, Peter, *Warhafftige handlung Wie und welcher massen der Türck die stat Ofen und Wien belegert* (n.p., 1530).

Thomas Aquinas, *De Rationibus Fidei contra Saracenos, Graecos et Armenos ad Cantorem Antiochenum: Reasons for the Faith against the Muslims (and One Objection of the Greeks and Armenians) to the Cantor of Antioch*, trans. Joseph Kenney, *Islamochristiana* 22 (1996), 31–52.

———, *Summa contra Gentiles*, trans. English Dominican Friars (London: Burns, Oates, and Washbourne, 1924).

Zwingli, Ulrich, *Corpus Reformatorum: Zwinglis Sämtliche Werke* (Zürich, 1905–).

Secondary Sources

Aasi, Ghulam Haider, *Muslim Understanding of Other Religions: A Study of Ibn Ḥazm's* Kitāb al-Faṣl fi al-Milal wa al-Ahwā' wa al-Niḥal (New Delhi: Adam Publishers, 2004).

Addison, James, *The Christian Approach to the Moslem: A Historical Study* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1942).

Ágoston, Gábor, 'Muslim Cultural Enclaves in Hungary Under Ottoman Rule', *AOH* 45 (1991), 181–204.

Ali, Abdullah Yusuf (trans.), *The Holy Qur'ān* (Madinah: The Presidency of Islamic Researches, Ifta, Call and Guidance, 1990).

Alphandery, P., 'Mahomet-Anti Christ das le Moyen Age Latin', in *Melanges Harturig Derenbourg (1844–1908) Recueil de Travaux d'erudition Dedies a la Memoire d'hartwig Derenbourg par ses Amis et ses eleves* (Paris: Ernest Levoux, 1909), 261–277.

Altaner, Berthold, *Die Dominikanermissionen des 13. Jahrhunderts: Forschungen zur Geschichte der kirchlichen Unionen und der Mohammedaner- und Heidenmission des Mittelalters* (Habelschwerdt: Frankes Buchhandlung, 1924).

Althaus, Paul, *The Ethics of Martin Luther*, trans. Robert Schultz (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1972).

D'Alverny, Marie-Thérèse, 'Deux Traductions Latines du Coran au Moyen Âge', *AHDL* 22/23 (1947/48), 69–131.

Anawati, George, 'La Notion de "Péché Originel" Existe-t-elle dans l'Islam?', *SI* 31 (1970), 29–40.

Ansari, Zafar, 'Some Reflections on Islamic Bases for Dialogue with Jews and Christians', *JES* 14:3 (1977), 433–447.

Apel, Dean, 'Luther's Approach to Islam: Ingemar Oberg's Search for Mission Praxis in the Weimar Edition of Luther's Works', *CT&M* 26:6 (1999), 439–450.

Arand, Charles and James Voelz, 'Large Catechism, III, 66', *CJ* 29:3 (2003), 232–234.

Armour, Sr., Rollin, 'Theodore Bibliander's *Alcoran* of 1543/1550', *PRS* 24:1 (1997), 101–115.

Arnold, Thomas, *The Preaching of Islam: A History of the Propagation of the Muslim Faith* (Westminster: Archibald Constable and Co., 1896).

Babinger, Franz, *Zwei baierische Türkenbüchlein (1542) und ihr Verfasser* (Munich: Verlag der Bayerischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1959).

Baldwin, John, 'Luther's Eschatological Appraisal of the Turkish Threat in *Eine Heerpredigt wider den Türken*', *AUSS* 33:2 (1995), 185–202.

Barge, Hermann, 'Luthers Stellung zum Islam und Seine Übersetzung der Confutatio des Ricoldus', *AM* 43:2/3 (1916), 79–82, 108–121.

Barnes, Robin, *Prophecy and Gnosis: Apocalypticism in the Wake of the Lutheran Reformation* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1988).

Bayer, Oswald, 'Nature and Institution: Luther's Doctrine of the Three Orders', *LQ* 12:2 (1998), 125–159.

———, *Schöpfung als Anrede: Zu einer Hermeneutik der Schöpfung*, 2nd edn. (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 1990).

Becker, Siegbert, *The Foolishness of God: The Place of Reason in the Theology of Martin Luther* (Milwaukee: Northwestern, 1982).

———, 'Luther's Apologetics', *CTM* 29:10 (1958), 742–759.

Beintker, Horst, *Die Überwindung der Anfechtung bei Luther: Eine Studie zu seiner Theologie nach den Operationes in Psalmos, 1519–1521* (Berlin: Evangelische Verlaganstalt, 1954).

Beltz, Walter, 'Luthers Verständnis von Islam und Koran', *WZGSR* 32:5 (1983), 85–91.

Bender, Harold, 'The Pacifism of the Sixteenth Century Anabaptists', *CH* 24 (1955), 119–131.
Bernhardt, Karl-Heinz, 'Luther und der Islam', *Standpunkt* 11 (1983), 263–265, 328, 330; 12 (1984), 87–91.
Biechler, James, 'A New Face toward Islam: Nicholas of Cusa and John of Segovia', in Gerald Christianson and Thomas Izbicki (eds.), *Nicholas of Cusa: In Search of God and Wisdom* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1991), 185–202.
———, 'Christian Humanism Confronts Islam: Sifting the Qur'an with Nicholas of Cusa', *JES* 13 (1976), 1–14.
Blanks, David, 'Western Views of Islam in the Premodern Period: A Brief History of Past Approaches', in David Blanks and Michael Frassetto (eds.), *Western Views of Islam in the Medieval and Early Modern Europe: Perception of Other* (London: Macmillan Press, 1999), 11–53.
Bobzin, Hartmut, '"Aber itzt … hab ich den Alcoran gesehen Latinisch …" Gedanken Martin Luthers zum Islam', in Hans Medick and Peer Schmidt (eds.), *Luther Zwischen den Kulturen* (Göttingen: Vandernhoeck and Ruprecht, 2004), 260–276.
———, '"A Treasury of Heresies": Christian Polemics against the Koran', in Stefan Wild (ed.), *The Qur'an as Text* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1996), 157–175.
———, *Der Koran im Zeitalter der Reformation: Studien zur Fruhgeschichte der Arabistik und Islamkunde in Europa* (Stuttgart: Steiner Verlag, 1995).
———, 'Latin Translations of the Koran: A Short Overview', *Is* 70 (1993), 193–206.
———, 'Über Theodor Biblianders Arbeit am Koran (1542/3)', *ZDMG* 136 (1986), 347–363.
———, 'Martin Luthers Beitrag zur Kenntnis und Kritik des Islam', *NZSTR* 27 (1985), 262–289.
———, 'Zur Anzahl der Drucke von Biblianders Koranausgabe im Jahr 1543', *BZGA* 85 (1985), 213–219.
Boehmer, Heinrich, *Luther in the Light of Recent Research*, trans. E.S.G. Pott (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1930).
Bohnstedt, John, 'The Infidel Scourge of God: The Turkish Menace as Seen by German Pamphleteers of the Reformation Era', *TAPS* 56:9 (1968).
Bornkamm, Heinrich, *Luther's Doctrine of the Two Kingdoms in the Context of His Theology*, trans. Karl Hertz (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1966).
Bouman, Johan, *Gott und Mensch im Koran* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1977).
Bouwsma, William, *Concordia Mundi: the Career and Thought of Guillaume Postel* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1957).
Boyd, E.I.M., 'Ricoldus: A Dominican Missionary to Moslems in the Thirteenth Century', *MW* 8 (1918), 45–51.
Brecht, Martin, 'Luther und die Türken', in Bodo Guthmüller and Wilhelm Kühlman (eds.), *Europa und die Türken in der Renaissance* (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer Verlag, 2000), 9–27.
———, *Martin Luther: Shaping and Defining the Reformation, 1521–1532* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1990).

———, *Martin Luther: The Preservation of the Church, 1532–1546* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1985).
Brentjes, Burchard, 'Anfänge der Orientalistik an der Universität Wittenberg', *WZMLU Medizinische und Pharmazeutische Arbeiten* 34:2 (1985), 80–81.
Buchanan, Harvey, 'Luther and the Turks, 1519–1529', *ARG* 47:2 (1956), 145–160.
Al-Bukhārī, Muḥammad ibn Ismāʿīl, *Saḥiḥ al-Bukhārī*, trans. Muḥammad Khan, 9 vols. (Chicago: Kazi Publications, 1979).
Al-Bukhārī, Muḥammad ibn Ismāʿīl, *The Translation of the Meanings of Saḥiḥ al-Bukhārī (Arabic-English)*, trans. Muḥammad Khan, 9 vols. (Riyadh: Darussalam Publishers, 1997).
Bunkowske, Eugene, 'Luther, the Missionary', in Eugene Bunkowske and Michael Nichol (eds.), *God's Mission in Action* (Fort Wayne: The Great Commission Resource Library, 1986), 54–89.
Burman, Thomas, 'Polemic, Philology, and Ambivalence: Reading the Qur'ān in Latin Christendom', *JIS* 15:2 (2004), 181–209.
———, '*Tafsīr* and Translation: Traditional Arabic Qur'ān Exegesis and the Latin Qur'āns of Robert of Ketton and Mark of Toledo', *Speculum* 73 (1998), 703–732.
———, *Religious Polemic and the Intellectual History of the Mozarabs, c. 1050–1200* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1994).
Burns, Robert, 'Christian-Islamic Confrontation in the West: The Thirteenth-Century Dream of Conversion', *AHR* 76:5 (1971), 1386–1434.
Burr, David, 'Antichrist and Islam in Medieval Franciscan Exegesis', in John Tolan (ed.), *Medieval Perceptions of Islam: A Book of Essays* (New York: Garland Publishing, 1996), 131–156.
Choi, David, 'Martin Luther's Response to the Turkish Threat: Continuity and Contrast with the Medieval Commentators Riccoldo da Monte Croce and Nicholas of Cusa' (PhD Dissertation: Princeton Theological Seminary, 2003).
Çirackman, Asli, 'From Tyranny to Despotism: The Enlightenment's Unenlightened Image of the Turks', *IJMES* 33 (2001), 49–68.
Clark, Harry, 'The Publication of the Koran in Latin: A Reformation Dilemma', *SCJ* 15:1 (1984), 3–12.
Classen, Albrecht, 'The World of the Turks Described by an Eye-Witness: Georgius de Hungaria's Dialectical Discourse on the Foreign World of the Ottoman Empire', *JEMH* 7:3 (2003), 257–279.
Clemen, Otto, 'Schriften und Lebensausgang des Eisenacher Franziskaners Johann Hiltens', *ZKG* 47 (1928), 402–412.
Coles, Paul, *The Ottoman Impact on Europe* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1968).
Corsepius, H.G., 'Mohammedaner Mission in 16. Jahrhundert', *Orient* 20 (1938), 89–93.
Cragg, Kenneth, *Jesus and the Muslim: An Exploration* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1985).
Cross, F.L. and E.A. Livingstone (eds.), *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, 3rd edn. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997).
Cruz, Jo Ann, 'Popular Attitudes toward Islam in Medieval Europe', in David

Blanks and Michael Frassetto (eds.), *Western Views of Islam in Medieval and Early Modern Europe: Perception of Other* (London: Macmillan Press, 1999), 55–81.
Cutler, A., 'The First Crusade and the Idea of Conversion', *MW* 58 (1968), 57–71, 155–164.
Daniel, E.R., 'Apocalyptic Conversion: The Joachite Alternative to the Crusades', *Traditio* 25 (1969), 127–154.
Daniel, Norman, 'The Image of Islam in the Medieval and the Early Modern Period', in Azim Nanji (ed.), *Mapping Islamic Studies: Geneology, Continuity and Change* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1997), 128–148.
———, *Islam and the West: The Making of an Image*, 2nd edn. (Oxford: Oneworld, 1993).
Dannenfeldt, Karl, 'The Renaissance Humanists and the Knowledge of Arabic', *SR* 2 (1955), 96–117.
Darling, Linda, 'Contested Territory: Ottoman Holy War in Comparative Context', *SI* 91 (2000), 133–163.
Dávid, Géza and Pál Fodor, 'Hungarian Studies in Ottoman History', in Fikret Adanir and Suraiya Faroqhi (eds.), *The Ottomans and the Balkans: A Discussion of Historiography* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 2002), 305–349.
Delius, Hans-Ulrich, *Die Quellen von Martin Luthers Genesisvorlesung* (Munich: Kaiser, 1992).
Dondaine, Antoine 'Ricoldiana: Notes sur les oeuvres de Ricoldo da Montecroce', *AFP* 37 (1967), 119–179.
Dulles, Avery, *A History of Apologetics* (London: Hutchinson and Co., 1971).
Echevarria, Ana, *The Fortress of Faith: The Attitude towards Muslims in Fifteenth-Century Spain* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1999).
Edwards, Mark U, *Luther's Last Battles: Politics and Polemics, 1531–1546* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1983).
Egli, Emil, 'Biblianders Missionsgedanke', *ZW* 3:2 (1913), 46–50.
———, 'Biblianders Leben und Schriften', in *Analecta Reformatoria*, vol. 2 (Zurich: Zürcher and Furrer, 1901).
Elert, Werner, *The Structure of Lutheranism: The Theology and Philosophy of Life of Lutheranism in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries*, vol. 1, trans. Walter Hansen (Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1962).
———, *Morphologie des Luthertums*, 2 vols. (Munich: C.H. Beck'sche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1931).
Encyclopaedia of Islam, 2nd edn. (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1960–).
Engelbrecht, Edward, *One True God: Understanding Large Catechism II 66* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2007)
Esack, Farid, *The Qur'an: A Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oneworld, 2002).
Estes, James, 'Luther on the Role of Secular Authority in the Reformation', *LQ* 17 (2003), 199–225.
Al-Faruqi, Isma'il, 'A Comparison of the Islamic and Christian Approaches to Hebrew Scripture', *JBR* 31 (1963), 283–293.
Fauth, Dieter, 'Das Türkenbild bei Thomas Müntzer', *BTZ* 11:1 (1994), 2–12.
Fischer, S.N., *The Foreign Relations of Turkey, 1481–1512* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1948).
Fischer-Galati, Stephen, 'The Protestant Reformation and Islam', in Abraham

Ascher, Tibor Halasi-Kun, and Béla Kiraly (eds.), *The Mutual Effects of the Islamic and Judeo-Christian Worlds: The East European Pattern* (New York: Brooklyn College Press, 1979), 53–64.

———, 'Judeo-Christian Aspects of *Pax Ottomanica*', in Béla Király (ed.), *Tolerance and Movements of Religious Dissent in Eastern Europe* (Boulder: East European Quarterly, 1975), 185–197.

———, *Ottoman Imperialism and German Protestantism, 1521–1555* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1959).

Fodor, Pál, 'Ottoman Policy Towards Hungary, 1520–1541', *AOAH* 45 (1991), 271–345.

Forell, George, 'Luther and the War Against the Turks', in William Russell (ed.), *Martin Luther, Theologian of the Church: Collected Essays* (St. Paul: Luther Seminary, 1994), 123–134.

———, 'Luther's Conception of Natural Orders', in William Russell (ed.), *Martin Luther, Theologian of the Church: Collected Essays* (St. Paul: Luther Seminary, 1994), 66–82.

Gerrish, Brian, *Grace and Reason: A Study in the Theology of Martin Luther* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1962).

Gilchrist, John, *Jam' Al-Qur'an: The Codification of the Qur'an Text* (n.p., 1989).

Glaser, Ida, 'Qur'anic Challenges for Genesis', *JSOT* 75 (1997), 3–19.

Goddard, Hugh, *A History of Christian-Muslim Relations* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2000).

Göllner, Carl, *Turcica: Die europaischen Turkendrucke des XVI. Jahrhunderts*, 2 vols. (Bucuresti, Editura Academiei, 1961).

Grant, Edward, *God and Reason in the Middle Ages* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001).

Grisar, Hartmann, *Martin Luther: His Life and Work*, vol. 3, trans. E.M. Lamond (London: Kegan Paul, 1914).

Grislis, Egil, 'Luther and the Turks', *MW* 64 (1974), 180–193, 275–291.

Hagemann, Ludwig, *Martin Luther und der Islam*, 2nd edn. (Altenberge: Christliche Islamisches Schrifttum, 1998).

———, 'Zum Islamverständnis Martin Luthers', *MR* 14 (1994), 83–91.

———, 'Der Islam in Verständnis und Kritik bei Martin Luther', *TTZ* 103:2 (1994), 131–151.

———, 'Der Islam in Verständnis und Kritik bei Nikolaus von Kues und Martin Luther', *W&A* 32 (1991), 131–138.

———, 'Zur Auseinandersetzung des Christentums mit dem Islam im Mittelalter und in der Reformationszeit', *V&F* 32:1 (1987), 43–62.

———, 'Die erste lateinische Koranübersetzung—Mittel zur Verständigung zwischen Christen und Muslimen im Mittelalter', in Albert Zimmermann and Ingrid Craemer-Ruegenberg (eds.), *Orientalische Kultur und europäisches Mittelalter* (Leiden: E.J. Brill), 45–58.

———, *Der Kur'ān in Verständnis und Kritik Bei Nikolaus von Kues: Ein Beitrag zur Erhellung islāmisch-christlicher Geschichte* (Frankfurt am Main: Josef Knecht, 1976).

Hagenbach, Karl, 'Luther und der Koran vor dem Rathe zu Basel', *BVG* 9 (1870), 291–326.

Halasi-Kun, Tibor, 'Sixteenth-Century Turkish Settlements in Southern Hungary', *Belleten* 28 (1964), 1–72.
Haleem, Harfiyah et al. (eds.), *The Crescent and the Cross: Muslim and Christian Approaches to War and Peace* (London: Macmillan Press, 1998).
Hasluck, F.W., *Christianity and Islam under the Sultans*, 2 vols. (New York: Octagon Books, 1973).
Headley, John, 'Luther and the Fifth Lateran Council', *ARG* 64 (1973), 55–78.
———, *Luther's View of Church History* (London: Yale University Press, 1963).
Heath, Michael, 'Erasmus and War against the Turk', in Jean-Claude Margolin (ed.), *Acta Conventus Neo-latini Turonensis*, vol. 2 (Paris: Vrin, 1980), 991–999.
Hein, Steven, 'Reason and the Two Kingdoms: An Essay in Luther's Thought', *The Springfielder* 36:2 (1972), 138–148.
Henrich, Sarah and James L. Boyce, 'Martin Luther-Translations of Two Prefaces on Islam: Preface to the *Libellus de ritu et moribus Turcorum* (1530), and *Preface to Bibliander's Edition of the Qur'ān* (1543)', *WW* 16:2 (1996), 250–266.
Hertz, Allen, 'Muslims, Christians and Jews in Sixteenth-Century Belgrade', in Abraham Ascher, Tibor Halasi-Kun, and Béla Király (eds.), *The Mutual Effects of the Islamic and Judeo-Christian Worlds: The East European Pattern* (New York: Brooklyn College Press, 1979), 149–164.
Hess, Andrew, 'The Ottoman Conquest of Egypt (1517) and the Beginning of the Sixteenth-Century World War', *IJMES* 4/1 (1973), 55–76.
Heutger, Nicolaus, 'Luther und der Islam: Scharfe Äusserungen blieben glücklicherweise ohne Nachwirkung', *LM* 22 (1983), 497–498.
———, 'Luthers Stellung zum Islam', *ZRGG* 35 (1983), 359–362.
Hillerbrand, Hans J. (ed.), *The Oxford Encyclopedia of the Reformation*, 4 vols. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996).
Hodgson, Marshall G.S., 'The Role of Islam in World History', in Edmund Burke III (ed.), *Rethinking World History: Essays on Europe, Islam, and World History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 97–125.
Hoeberichts, J., *Francis and Islam* (Quincy: Franciscan Press, 1997).
Holl, Karl, 'Luther und die Mission', *NAMZ* 1 (1924), 36–49.
Holsten, Walter, 'Heiden, Juden, Moslems und Luthers Glaube', *Luther* 31 (1960), 110–118.
———, 'Reformation und Mission', *ARG* 44 (1953), 1–32.
———, *Christentum und nichtchristliche Religion nach der Auffassung Luthers* (Gütersloh: C. Bertelsmann, 1932).
Horacek, Cyril, 'Die wirtschaftlichen und sozialen Aspekte der Türkenkriege im 16. Jahrhundert', in Felix Tauer (ed.), *Charisteria Orientalia Praecipue ad Persiam Pertinentia* (Prague: Nakladatelstvi Ceskoslovenske Akademie VED, 1956), 103–112.
House, H. Wayne, 'The Value of Reason in Luther's View of Apologetics', *CJ* 7:2 (1981), 65–67.
Housley, Norman, 'Erasmus, the Crusade, and War against the Turk', in John France and Wlliam Zajac (eds.), *The Crusaders and Their Sources* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1998), 259–279.

———, Housely, Norman (ed.), *Documents on the Later Crusades, 1274–1580* (London: Macmillan Press, 1996).
———, *The Later Crusades, 1274–1580* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992).
Hughes, Thomas, *A Dictionary of Islam* (New Delhi: Asian Educational Services, 2001).
Huhtinen, Pekka, '*Luther and World Missions*: A Review', *CTQ* 65:1 (2001), 15–29.
Ibn Isḥāq, *The Life of Muḥammad: A Translation of Ibn Isḥāq's Sīrat Rasūl Allāh*, trans. Alfred Guillaume (London: Oxford University Press, 1955).
İnalcik, Halil, 'Servile Labor in the Ottoman Empire', in Abraham Ascher, Tibor Halasi-Kun, and Béla Kiraly (eds.), *The Mutual Effects of the Islamic and Judeo-Christian Worlds: The East European Pattern* (New York: Brooklyn College Press, 1979), 25–52.
———, *The Ottoman Empire: The Classical Age, 1300–1600* (New York: Praeger, 1973).
———, 'The Rise of the Ottoman Empire', in P.M. Holt, Ann Lambton, and Bernard Lewis (eds.), *The Cambridge History of Islam*, vol. 1A (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970), 295–323.
İsom-Verhaaren, Christine, 'An Ottoman Report about Martin Luther and the Emperor: New Evidence of the Ottoman Interest in the Protestant Challenge to the Power of Charles V', *Turcica* 28 (1996), 299–317.
Itzkowitz, Norman, *Ottoman Empire and Islamic Tradition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1972).
Izbicki, Thomas, 'The Possiblity of Dialogue with Islam in the Fifteenth Century', in Gerald Christianson and Thomas Izbicki (eds.), *Nicholas of Cusa: In Search of God and Wisdom* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1991), 175–183.
Jankovics, József, 'The Image of the Turks in Hungarian Renaissance Literature', in Bodo Guthmüller and Wilhelm Kühlman (eds.), *Europa und die Türken in der Renaissance* (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer Verlag, 2000), 267–273.
Jannasch, Wilhelm, 'Luther und die Türken', *CW* 30 (1916), 154–157.
Janz, Denis, *Luther on Thomas Aquinas: The Angelic Doctor in the Thought of the Reformer* (Stuttgart: Steiner Verlag, 1989).
Johansen, Paul, 'Johann von Hilten in Livland', *ARG* 36 (1939), 24–50.
Kaegi, Walter, 'Initial Byzantine Reactions to the Arab Conquest', *CH* 38 (1969), 139–149.
Kafadar, Cemal, 'The Ottomans and Europe', in Thomas Brady, Jr., Heiko Oberman, and James Tracy (eds.), *Handbook of European History, 1400–1600* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1994), 589–635.
Kandler, Karl-Hermann, 'Luther und der Koran', *Luther* 64:1 (1993), 3–9.
Kappus, Adolph, 'Die Türken vor Wien und Luther', *Die Wartburg* 28 (1929), 394–399.
Karamustafa, Ahmet, *God's Unruly Friends: Dervish Groups in the Later Middle Period, 1200–1550* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1994).
Karpat, Kemal (ed.), *The Ottoman State and Its Place in World History* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1974).
Karsh, Efraim, *Islamic Imperialism: A History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006).

Kawerau, Gustav, 'Luthers Vorrede zu Biblianders Ausgabe des Koran (1543)', *TSK* 86 (1913), 129–134.
Kedar, Benjamin, *Crusade and Mission: European Approaches toward the Muslim* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984).
Kertbeny, K.M, *Ungarn betreffende deutsche Erstlings Drucke, 1454–1600* (Budapest: Universitats-Buchdruckerei, 1881).
Király, Béla, 'The Sublime Porte, Vienna, Transylvania and the Dissemination of Protestant Reformation in Royal Hungary', in Béla Király (ed.), *Tolerance and Movements of Religious Dissent in Eastern Europe* (Boulder: East European Quarterly, 1975), 199–221.
Kissling, Hans, 'Türkenfurcht und Türkenhoffnung im 15/16. Jahrhundert: zur Geschichte eines "Komplexes"', *SF* 23 (1964), 1–18.
Köhler, Manfred, *Melanchthon und der Islam: Ein Beitrag zur Klärung des Verhältnisse zwischen Christentum und Fremdreligionen in der Reformationszeit* (Leipzig: Klotz, 1938).
Köhler, Walter, 'Zu Biblianders Koran-Ausgabe', *Zw* 3:2 (1918), 349–350.
Kolb, Robert, 'Luther on Two Kinds of Righteousness: Reflections on His Two Dimensional Definition of Humanity and the Heart of His Theology', *LQ* 13 (1999), 449–466.
Kopff, E. Christian, 'Who Believes in and Worships the One True God in Luther's Large Catechism', *Logia* 13 (2003), 55–57.
Kortepeter, Max, 'The Turkish Question in the Era of the Fifth Lateran Council (1512–1517)', in Donald Little (ed.), *Essays on Islamic Civilization* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1976), 155–178.
Krey, Philip, 'Nicholas of Lyra and Paul of Burgos on Islam', in John Tolan (ed.), *Medieval Perceptions of Islam: A Book of Essays* (New York: Garland Publishing, 1996), 153–174.
Kritzeck, James, *Peter the Venerable and Islam* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1964).
———, 'Peter the Venerable and the Toledan Collection', in Giles Constable and James Kritzeck (eds.), *Petrus Venerabilis (1156–1956): Studies and Texts Commemorating the Eighth Centenary of His Death* (Rome: Orbis Catholicus, 1956), 176–201.
Küppers, Jürgen, 'Luthers Dreihierarchienlehre als Kritik an der mittelalterlichen Gesellschaftsauffassung', *ET* 8 (1959), 361–374.
Kurze, Dietrich, 'Popular Astrology and Prophecy in the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries', in Paolo Zambelli (ed.), 'Astrologi hallucinati': *Stars and the End of the World in Luther's Time* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1986), 177–193.
Kusukawa, Sachiko, *A Wittenberg University Library Catalogue of 1536* (Cambridge: LP Publications, 1995).
Lamoreaux, John, 'Early Eastern Christian Responses to Islam', in John Tolan (ed.), *Medieval Christian Perceptions of Islam: A Book of Essays* (New York: Garland, 1996), 3–29.
Lamparter, Helmut, *Luthers Stellung zum Türkenkrieg* (Munich: Evangelische Verlag Albert Lempp, 1940).
Lazarus-Yafeh, Hava, *Intertwined Worlds: Medieval Islam and Bible Criticism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992).

Lewis, Bernard, *Islam and the West* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993).
Lind, Richard, *Luthers Stellung zu Kreuz- und Türkenkrieg* (Giessen: Brühl, 1940).
Lohse, Bernard, *Martin Luther's Theology: Its Historical and Systematic Development*, trans. Roy Harrisville (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1999).
———, *Martin Luther: An Introduction to His Life and Work*, trans. Robert Schultz (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1987).
———, 'Reason and Revelation in Luther', *SJT* 13 (1960), 337–365.
Louth, Andrew (ed.), *Ancient Commentary on Scripture: Genesis 1–11* (London: Fitzroy Dearborn, 2001)
Lybyer, Albert, *The Government of the Ottoman Empire in the Time of Suleiman the Magnificent* (New York: Russell & Russell, 1966).
———, *Constantinople as Capital of the Ottoman Empire* (Washington: American Historical Association, 1919).
Mandonnet, P.F., 'Fra Riccoldo de Monte-Croce: Pelerin en Terre Sainte et missionaire en Orient, XIIIe siecle', *RB* 2 (1893), 44–61, 182–202, 584–607.
Manteufel, Thomas, 'What Luther Meant', *CJ* 29:4 (2003), 366–369.
Manuel, Pierre, 'Une Encylopédie de l'Islam: Le Recueil de Bibliander 1543 et 1550', *ETI* 21 (1946), 31–37.
Marshall, Ronald, 'Luther the Lumberjack', *LQ* 10 (1996), 107–110.
Masood, Steven, *The Bible and the Qur'an: A Question of Integrity* (Cumbria, OM Publishing, 2001).
Mau, Rudolf, 'Luthers Stellung zu den Türken', in Helmar Junghans (ed.), *Leben und Werk Martin Luthers von 1526 bis 1546: Festgabe zu seinem 500. Geburtstag in Auftrag des theologischen Arbeitskreis für Reformationsgeschichte Forschung* (Göttingen: Vandenhöck und Ruprecht, 1983), 647–662.
Maududi, Sayyid, *Towards Understanding Islam*, 22nd edn., trans. Khurshid Ahmad (Lahore: Idara Tarjuman-Ul-Quran Ltd, 1995).
Maurer, Wilhelm, *Luthers Lehre von den drei Hierarchien und ihr mittelalterlicher Hintergrund* (München: C.H. Beck Verlag 1970).
———, 'Reformation und Mission', *LMJ* (1963), 20–41.
Mazzaoui, Michel, 'Global Policies Sultan Selim, 1512–1520', in Donald Little (ed.), *Essays on Islamic Civilization* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1976), 224–243.
McGinn, Bernard, *Visions of the End: Apocalyptic Tradition in the Middle Ages* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998).
McGrath, Alister, *Luther's Theology of the Cross: Martin Luther's Theological Breakthrough* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1985).
Mérigoux, Jean-Marie, 'L'ouvrage d'un frère prêcheur florentin en Orient à la fin du XIIIe siècle. Le *Contra legem Sarracenorum* de Riccoldo da Monte di Croce', *MD* 15 (1986), 1–59.
———, 'Un précurseur du dialogue islamo-chrétien, Frére Ricoldo', *RT* 73 (1973), 609–621.
Michel, Thomas, *A Muslim Theologian's Response to Christianity: Ibn Taymiyya's Al-Jawab Al-Sahih* (Delmar: Caravan Books, 1984).
Miller, Gregory, 'Fighting Like a Christian: The Ottoman Advance and the Development of Luther's Doctrine of Just War', in David Whitford (ed.), *Caritas et Reformatio: Essays on Church and Society in Honor of Carter Lindberg* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2002), 41–57.

———, 'Luther on the Turks and Islam', *LQ* 14 (2000), 79–97.
———, 'Holy War and Holy Terror: Views of Islam in German Pamphlet Literature, 1520–1545' (PhD Dissertation: Boston University, 1994).
Mirbt, Carl, *Quellen zur Geschichte des Papsttums und das römische Katholizismus*, 2nd edn. (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 1901).
Montgomery, John W., 'Luther and the Missionary Challenge', in *In Defense of Martin Luther* (Milwaukee: Northwestern Publishing House, 1970), 159–169.
———, 'The Apologetic Thrust of Lutheran Theology', *LSQ* 11:1 (1970), 14–31.
Moore, Sydney, 'The Turkish Menace in the Sixteenth Century', *MLR* 40 (1945), 30–36.
Moschkau, Alfred (ed.), 'Das Türkenglocken', in *Saxonia: Zeitschrift für Geschichts Altertums- und Landeskunde des Königreichs Sachsen* (Leipzig: Louis Senf, 1877), 95.
Muldoon, James, *Popes, Lawyers, and Infidels: The Church and the Non-Christian World* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1979).
Munro, Dana, 'The Western Attitude toward Islam during the Period of the Crusades', *Speculum* 6:3 (1931), 329–343.
———, 'The Speech of Pope Urban II at Clermont, 1095', *AHR* 11:2 (1906), 231–242.
Nasr, Vali, *The Shia Revival: How Conflicts within Islam Will Shape the Future* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company).
Naumann, Jonathan, 'Luther, Lutherans, and Islam', *CJ* 28:1 (2002), 54–63.
Nijenhuis, W., 'Luther en de Islam', *NTT* 33 (1979), 195–210.
Nordling, John, 'Theological Potpourri: Large Catechism III, 66, Latin Version', *CJ* 29:3 (2003), 235–239.
Öberg, Ingemar, *Luther and World Mission*, trans. Dean Apel (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2007).
———, *Luther och Världsmissionen: Historisk-systematiska studier medsärskild hänsyn till bibelutläggningen* (Åbo, Finland: Åbo Akademi, 1991).
Oberman, Heiko, 'Teufelsdreck: Eschatology and Scatology in the "Old" Luther', in *The Impact of the Reformation* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1994), 51–68.
———, 'Martin Luther: Forerunner of the Reformation', in Andrew Gow (trans.), *The Reformation: Roots and Ramifications* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1994), 23–52.
———, 'Martin Luther: Between the Middle Ages and the Modern Times', in *The Reformation: Roots and Ramifications*, trans. Andrew Gow (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1994), 53–75.
———, *Luther: Man between God and the Devil*, trans. Eileen Walliser Schwarzbart (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989).
Ozment, Steven, *Protestants: The Birth of a Revolution* (New York: Doubleday, 1991).
Pálffy, Géza, 'The Hungarian-Habsburg Border Defence Systems,' in Géza Pálffy and Pál Fodor (eds.), *Ottomans, Hungarians and Habsburgs in Central Europe: The Military Confines in the Era of Ottoman Conquest* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 2000), 3–33.
Palmer, J.A.B., 'Fr. Georgius de Hungaria, O.P., and the *Tractatus de moribus, condictionibus et nequicia turcorum*', *BJRL* 34 (1951/52), 44–68.

Panella, Emilio, 'Ricerche su Riccoldo da Monte di Croce', *AFP* 58 (1988), 5–85.
Pannier, J., 'Calvin et les Turcs', *RH* 62:3 (1937), 268–286.
Parry, V.J., 'Renaissance Historical Literature in Relation to the Near and Middle East (with Special Reference to Paolo Giovio)', in Bernard Lewis and P.M. Holt (eds.), *Historians of the Middle East* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1962), 277–289.
———, 'The Ottoman Empire, 1520–1566', in G.R. Elton (ed.), *New Cambridge Modern History*, vol. 2 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1958), 510–533.
Patrides, C.A., 'The Bloody and Cruel Turke: The Background of a Renaissance Commonplace', *SR* 10 (1963), 126–135.
Pelikan, Jaroslav, *From Luther to Kierkegaard* (St. Louis: Concordia, 1950).
Pfister, Rudolf, 'Reformation, Türken, und Islam', *Zw* 10:6 (1956), 345–375.
———, 'Das Turkenbuchlein Theodor Biblianders', *TZ* 9 (1953), 438–454.
Pfotenhauer, Thomas, *Islam in the Crucible* (New Haven: Lutheran News, 2002).
Preus, Robert, *Theology of Post-Reformation Lutheranism*, 2 vols. (St Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1970/2).
Pulcini, Theodore, *Exegesis as Polemical Discourse: Ibn Ḥazm on Jewish and Christian Scriptures* (Atlanta: Scholar's Press, 1998).
Rajashekar, J. Paul and Timothy Wengert, 'Martin Luther, Philip Melanchthon, and the Publication of the Qur'an', *LQ* 16 (2002), 221–228.
Rajashekar, J. Paul, 'Luther and Islam: An Asian Perspective', *LuJ* 57 (1990), 174–191.
Ramm, Bernard, *Varieties of Christian Apologetics* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1961).
Reeves, Marjorie, 'The Originality and Influence of Joachim of Fiore', *Traditio* 36 (1980), 269–316.
———, 'History and Prophecy in Medieval Thought', *MH* 5 (1974), 51–75.
———, *The Influence of Prophecy in the Later Middle Ages: A Study of Joachimism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1969).
———, 'Joachimist Influences on the Idea of a Last World Emporer', *Traditio* 17 (1961), 323–370.
Rescher, Nicolas, 'Nicholas of Cusa on the Qur'an: A 15th Century Encounter with Islam', *MW* 55:3 (1965), 195–202.
Reu, Michel, *Luther and the Scriptures* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1944).
Rodinson, Maxime, *Europe and the Mystique of Islam*, trans. Roger Veinus (London: I.B. Tauris, 2002).
Roynesdal, Olaf, 'Luther's Polemics', *LQ* 6:3 (1992), 235–255.
Rupp, Gordon, 'Luther against "The Pope, the Turk, and the Devil"', in Peter Brooks (ed.), *Seven-Headed Luther: Essays in Commemoration of a Quincentenary, 1483–1983* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1983), 256–273.
———, *The Righteousness of God* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1953).
Saeed, Abdullah, 'The Charge of Distortion of Jewish and Christian Scriptures', *MW* 92 (2002), 419–436.

Sahas, Daniel, *John of Damascus on Islam: The 'Heresy of the Ishmaelites'* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1972).
Schleiermacher, Friederich, *Brief Outline on the Study of Theology*, 2nd edn., trans. Terrence N. Tice (Atlanta: John Knox, 1977).
Schöck, Cornelia, *Adam im Islam: Ein Beitrag zur Ideengeschichte der Sunna* (Berlin: Klaus Schwarz, 1993).
Schroeder, Edward, 'Luther's Commentary on the Third Article as a Clue to His Theology of Other Religions', *MA* 7:1 (1999), 4–10.
Schulz, Klaus Detlev, 'Lutheran Missiology in the 16th and 17th Centuries', *LSQ* 43:1 (2003), 5–54.
Schwanke, Johannes, 'Luther on Creation', *LQ* 16 (2002), 1–20.
Schwarz, Reinhard, 'Luthers Lehre von den drei Ständen und die drei Dimension der Ethik', *LuJ* 45 (1978), 15–34.
Schwoebel, Robert, *The Shadow of the Crescent: The Renaissance Image of the Turk, 1453–1517* (New York: St Martin's Press, 1967).
———, 'Coexistence, Conversion, and the Crusade against the Turks', *SR* 12 (1965), 164–187.
Segesvary, Victor, *L'Islam et la Réforme: Etude sur l'Attitude des Reformateurs Zurichois envers l'Islam, 1510–1550* (Lausanne: Editions l'Age d'Homme, 1978).
Selden, Jonathan, 'Aquinas, Luther, Melanchthon, and Biblical Apologetics', *GTJ* 5:2 (1984), 181–195.
Setton, Kenneth, *Western Hostility to Islam and Prophecies of Turkish Doom* (Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society, 1992).
———, *The Papacy and the Levant* (Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society, 1976).
———, 'Pope Leo X and the Turkish Peril', *PAPS* 113 (1969), 367–424.
———, 'Lutheranism and the Turkish Peril', *BS* 3 (1962), 133–168.
Shaw, Ezel, 'The Ottoman Aspects of *Pax Ottomanica*: The Political, Practical and Psychological Aspects of *Pax Ottomanica*', in Béla Király (ed.), *Tolerance and Movements of Religious Dissent in Eastern Europe* (Boulder: East European Quarterly, 1975), 165–182.
Shaw, Stanford, *History of the Ottoman Empire and Modern Turkey*, vol. 1 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976).
Siberry, Elizabeth, 'Missionaries and Crusaders, 1095–1274: Opponents or Allies?' *SCH* 20 (1983), 103–110.
Simon, G. 'Luther's Attitude toward Islam', *MW* 21 (1931), 257–262.
Slomp, Jan, 'Christianity and Lutheranism from the Perspective of Modern Islam', in Hans Medick and Peer Schmidt (eds.), *Luther Zwischen den Kulturen* (Göttingen: Vandernhoeck and Ruprecht, 2004), 277–296.
———, 'Calvin and the Turks', in Yvonne Haddad and Wadi Haddad (eds.), *Christian-Muslim Encounters* (Florida: University Press of Florida, 1995), 126–142.
Smith, Henry Preserved, 'Luther and Islam', *AJSLL* 39:3 (1923), 218–220.
Southern, Richard, *Western Views of Islam in the Middle Ages* (London: Harvard University Press, 1962).
Spath, L. Michael, '*De Lege Sarracenorum* According to Riccoldo da Monte Croce', *BRIIFS* 2:2 (2000), 115–140.

———, 'Riccoldo da Monte Croce: Medieval Pilgrim and Traveler to the Heart of Islam', *BRIIFS* 1:1 (1999), 55–102.
Steinmetz, David, 'Luther and the Two Kingdoms', in *Luther in Context*, 2nd edn. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2002), 112–125.
Stephenson, John, 'Drei Stände, Zwei Regimente und Zwei Reiche—Three Orders, Two Governments and Two Kingdoms', *Evangelium: Zweimonatschrift für Lutherische Theologia und Kirche* (1985), 48–60.
Strauss, Gerald, 'The Course of German History: The Lutheran Interpretation', in *Enacting the Reformation in Germany: Essays on Institution and Reception* (Aldershot: Variorum, 1993), I:686.
Surburg, Raymond, 'Luther and the Christology of the Old Testament', *LSQ* 23:1 (1983), 1–86.
Sweetman, James, *Islam and Christian Theology: A Study of the Interpretation of Theological Ideas in the Two Religions*, 2 vols. (London: Lutterworth Press, 1947).
Szakály, F., 'Nándorfehérvár, 1521: The Beginning of the End of the Medieval Hungarian Kingdom', in Géza Dávid and Pál Fodor (eds.), *Hungarian Ottoman Military and Diplomatic Relations in the Age of Süleyman the Magnificent* (Budapest 1994) 47–76.
Thompson, W.D.J. Cargill, 'The "Two Kingdoms" and the "Two Regiments": Some Problems of Luther's *Zwei-Reich-Lehre*', in *Studies in the Reformation: Luther to Hooker* (London: Athlone Press, 1980), 42–59.
———, *The Political Thought of Martin Luther* (Sussex: Harvester, 1984).
Tolan, John, *Saracens: Islam in the Medieval European Imagination* (Chichester: Columbia University Press, 2002).
———, 'Muslims as Pagan Idolaters in Chronicles of the First Crusade', in David Blanks and Michael Frassetto (eds.), *Western Views of Islam in Medieval and Early Modern Europe: Perception of Other* (London: Macmillan Press, 1999), 97–118.
———, 'Peter the Venerable on the "Diabolical Heresy of the Saracens"', in Alberto Ferreiro (ed.), *The Devil, Heresy, and Witchcraft in the Middle Ages: Essays in Honor of Jeffrey B. Russell* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1998), 345–367.
Turan, Osman, 'The Idea of World Domination among the Turks', *SI* 4 (1955), 70–90.
Unghváry, Alexander, *The Hungarian Protestant Reformation in the Sixteenth Century under the Ottoman Impact* (Lampeter: Edwin Mellen, 1989).
Vaughan, Dorothy, *Europe and the Turk: A Pattern of Alliances*. (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1954).
Vehlow, Katya, 'The Swiss Reformers Zwingli, Bullinger, and Bibliander and their Attitude to Islam (1520–1560)', *ICMR* 6:2 (1995), 229–254.
Vitkus, Daniel, 'Early Modern Orientalism: Representations of Islam in Sixteenth- and Seventeenth-Century Europe', in David Blanks and Michael Frassetto (eds.), *Western Views of Islam in Medieval and Early Modern Europe: Perception of Other* (London: Macmillan Press, 1999), 207–230.
Vocelka, Karl, 'Die inneren Auswirkungen des Auseinandersetzung Österreichs mit den Osmanen', *Südostforschung* 36 (1977), 13–34.
Vogler, Günther, 'Luthers Geschichtsauffassung im Spiegel seines Türken-

bildes', in Leo Stern and Max Steinmetz (eds.), *450 Jahre Reformation* (Berlin: VEB Deutscher Verlag der Wissenschaften, 1967), 118–127.
Völker, Karl, 'Luther und der Osten Europa', *LuJ* 15 (1933), 113–138.
Vryonis, Jr., Speros, 'Religious Change and Continuity in the Balkans and Anatolia from the Fourteenth through the Sixteenth Century', in *Islam and Cultural Change in the Middle Ages* (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1975), 127–140.
Wallmann, Johannes, 'Luthers Stellung zu Judentum und Islam', *Luther* 57:2 (1986), 49–60.
Wannenwetsch, Bernd, 'Luther's Moral Theology', in Donald McKim (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Martin Luther* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 120–135.
Warnek, Gustav, *Outline of a History of Protestant Mission from the Reformation to the Present Time* (London: Oliphant Anderson and Ferrier, 1906).
Watson, Philip, *Let God Be God: An Interpretation of the Theology of Martin Luther* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1966).
Watt, W. Montgomery, *Bell's Introduction to the Qur'ān* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1970).
Wetter, Paul, *Der Missionsgedanke bei Martin Luther* (Bonn: Verlag für Kultur und Wissenschaft, 1999)
Wheeler, Brannon, *Prophets in the Quran: An Introduction to the Quran and Muslim Exegesis* (London: Continuum, 2002).
Williams, George, *The Radical Reformation*, 3rd edn. (Kirksville: Sixteenth Century Journal, 1992).
———, 'Erasmus and the Reformers on Non-Christian Religions and *Salus Extra Ecclesia*', in Theodore Rabb and Jerrold Seigel (eds.), *Action and Conviction in Early Modern Europe* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969), 319–370.
Wilms, Franz-Elmar (trans.), *Al-Ghazalis Schrift wider die Gottheit Jesu* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1966).
Wolf, C. Umhau, 'Luther and Mohammedanism', *MW* 31 (1941), 161–177.
Wolf, Kenneth, 'Christian Views of Islam in Early Medieval Spain', in John Tolan (ed.), *Medieval Perceptions of Islam: A Book of Essays* (New York: Garland Publishing, 1996), 85–108.
Zhelyazkova, Antonia, 'Islamization in the Balkans as a Historiographical Problem: the Southeast-European Perspective', in Fikret Adanir and Suraiya Faroqhi (eds.), *The Ottomans and the Balkans: A Discussion of Historiography* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 2002), 223–266.
Zöckler, Otto, *Geschichte der Apologie des Christentums* (Gütersloh: C. Bertelsmann, 1907).

INDEX

Abū Maʿshar, 101
Alfonso de Espina, 15–16, 98
  Fortalicium fidei, 15–16, 98–99
ʿAlī ibn al-ʿAbbās, 101
Alexander VI, 40
Amsdorf, Nicholas, 78
Anfechtung, 151–154, 156, 157, 218, 225
  and Islam, 153–154, 159–162, 234
Apocalypse, Luther on, 79–84, 148, 175–176, 212–213, 236
  Antichrist, 83–84
  Daniel 7, 81–83, 87, 175–176
  Gog and Magog, 83, 148
  Islam and papacy, 83–83, 146, 147, 173, 208–209
  Oberman, Heiko, 79–80, 84
  as worldview, 79–80
Apocalypse, medieval views of, 19–23
Apologetics, 3n10
  Luther, 90–92, 107, 180, 207–208, 212, 213–214, 216–217, 222–225, 229–230, 233, 234
  Medieval, 9–19
  Dominican (Thomist), 181–182, 207–208
Aristotle, 191
Arnold von Harff, 49
Augustine, 224n53
Averroes (Ibn Rushd), 101
Avicenna (Ibn Sînâ), 101

Bader, Augustine, 52
Bartholomy de Montearduo, 101
Bernard of Clairvaux, 17
Bernhard von Breydenbach, 23–24, 100
  Peregrinatio, 24, 100
    Islam, 24
    Muḥammad, 24, 58
Beyezit II, 33–34
Bibliander, Theodor, 50–51, 53, 56–58, 59–60, 60–61, 63, 217
  Arabic, 51
  Machumetis, 53, 217
  Missions, 51
  Muḥammad, 56–58
  preparation evangelii, 61

Calixtus III, 38
Catechesis, 163–165, 176–177
Charles V, 76, 79
Choi, David, 3
Crusades, 9–10
  Fifth Lateran Council, 40–41, 42, 92
  Luther's critique of, 67–68, 75–77
  and polemics, 9–10, 16, 17
  Popes, 38–41
  Protestant rejection of, 43–44
  in the sixteenth century, 38–43

Devil, 80
Devşirme, 26, 64
Diet of Augsburg, 171
Dionysius Carthusianus, 16–17, 59, 98
  Contra Alchoranum, 16–17, 59, 98
Divorce (see Marriage)
Dulles, Avery, 4

Erasmus of Rotterdam, 43, 50
  Turks as 'half Christian', 50

Al-Farghānī, 101
Ferdinand I, 36–37, 43
Fifth Lateran Council, 40–41, 42, 92
Foreign policy, Luther on, 71–72
Francis of Assisi, 94, 172

Franck, Sebastian, 46–47
Frederick the Wise, 67

Georgijevic, Bartholomew, 55, 62–63
Georgius de Hungaria, 24–29, 54, 62, 88, 99, 102, 117, 159, 170, 175
  Tractatus, 1, 25–29, 54, 62, 88, 99, 104, 110, 111, 117, 159, 175
    Dervishes, 28
    Devşirme, 26
    Islam, 27–28, 29
    History of Islam, 25–26
    Joachimism, 25, 26
    Muḥammad, 29
  Legacy of, 28
  Luther's reception of, 25, 102
Giovio, Paolo, 41, 99, 109, 111

Hagemann, Ludwig, 2
Hartmuth von Cronberg, 51–52
Heresy (and Islam), 10, 14–15
Hilten, Johann, 22–23
Hungary, 35–38, 71, 80, 90
Hut, Hans, 52

Ibn Ḥazm, 229
Ibn Māsawayh, 101
Ibn Taymiyya, 225–226
Innocent VIII, 40
Irenaeus of Lyons, 229
Islam, Luther's critique of, 180–198
  Deficient, 218–219, 220–221
  Falsehoods, 199–200
  Immoral, 196–197
  Innovation, 216, 225
  Irrationality, 190–192
  Muḥammad, 142–144, 183–184, 188–189, 190–191
    Compared to Christ, 204–205
    Guilty of *shirk*, 204
  Qur'ān, 124, 180–209
    and Bible, 185–186, 203–204, 205–206
    Contradictory, 187–188
    Disorderly, 195–196
    Dubious history, 197–198, 200–201
    Errors, 192, 193
    Full of fables, 187
    Sensual, 186–187, 191–192
  Revelation, 228–229
  Taḥrīf, 184–185, 229–230
  Unjust, 196–197
  Violent, 194–195
Islam, Luther's knowledge of, 108–127
  Allah, 120–123
  Dervishes, 111, 167–168
  Fischer-Galati, Stephen, 108
  Hagemann, Ludwig, 108
  History, 109–111
  Jihād, 143–145
  Marriage, 112–113, 146–147
    Qur'ān, 112–113
    Turks, 146–147
  Muḥammad, 116–119, 124, 131, 142–143
  Practice (five pillars), 126–127
    Shahāda, 122–123, 126
  Qur'ān, 125
  Shī'a, 111
  Sources, 97–103
    Commentario delle cose de' Turchi 99, 109, 111
    Confutatio Alcorani, 93, 97, 98, 100–101, 102, 108
      Luther's translation of, 91, 178–183, 201, 234–235
    Contra Alchoranum 98
    Cribratio Alkorani, 97, 98, 100, 101, 108
    De orbis terrae Concordia 99
    Fortalicium, 98–99
    Tractatus, 1, 97–98, 99, 100, 102, 108, 109
    Qur'ān, 98, 103, 108, 177
    Neue Zeitung, 99
  Study of, 104–107
  Sunnī, 111
  Terminology, 109
  Theology, 113–126
    Anthropology, 123–124, 215–216, 226–228
    Christology, 113–116, 142, 177

Determinism, 123
Prophetology, 116–119
Shirk, 116–118, 121–122
Soteriology, 215–216, 226–228
Taḥrīf, 125–126, 229
Vis-à-vis Christianity, 226–230, 232–235
Tradition, 126
Ottoman culture, 111–113
and the Christian, 159–162
Qurʾān, 117–118, 124–126, 131, 177–178, 180–198, 181
Wolf, C. Umhau, 108
Islam, Sixteenth-century perceptions of, 9–29, 53–64 *Devşirme*, 64
Jesus (*ʿĪsā*), 61–62
Muḥammad, 55–58, 60
Practice (five pillars), 62
Qurʾān, 58–60
Status of non-Muslims, 63–64
Tawḥīd, 61
Terminology, 4–55
Theology, 60–62
Turkish culture, 62–64
Italus, Johannes Baptista, 49, 50

Joachim of Fiore, 19–21, 25
Jonas, Justus, 44, 54, 62, 63, 64
Juan de Segovia, 11, 58
Julius II, 40–41
Just War, 43–44
Luther on, 71–79
Justin Martyr, 229

Knaust, Heinrich, 55–56, 59
Kydones, Demetrios, 15, 100

Leo X, 41, 68
Louis II of Hungary, 35–36, 44
Llull, Raymond, 18–19, 53, 100

Marriage, 136–137
Maximilian I, 40, 41
Mehmet II, 31, 32–33, 38, 39
Melanchthon, Philip, 44, 59–60, 62, 198, 212
Missions, 49–53
Anabaptists, 52
and the apocalypse, 52
and Luther, 92–94, 172–173, 176–177, 180, 214, 236–237
Müntzer, Thomas, 45–46, 52, 145–146

Nicholas V, 38
Nicholas of Cusa, 17–18, 51
Cribratio Alkorani, 17–18
pia interpretatio, 17–18, 51, 201
Muḥammad, 18, 58
Nicholas of Lyra, 21–22

Oberman, Heiko, 79–80, 84
Oporinus, Johannes, 59
Ottoman conquests, 32–38, 176
and Christian captivity, 1, 87–90
as divine chastisement, 67–70
Mahometisch Reich, 82, 153–154, 156, 176
Military response to, 37–43, 71–79
Spiritual responses to, 47–49
Catholic, 47–48
Luther, 85–87
Lutherans, 48–49

Pacifism, 44–46
Luther's critique of, 73–75
as treason, 85–87, 88–90, 163
Paul II, 39
Paul of Burgos, 21–22
Pax Ottomanica, 85–87, 141
Pius II, 39, 49
Pius III, 40
Perpetual church, 214–216, 222–225
and the first gospel, 222–224
Peter of Cluny, 10–11
Postel, Guillame, 52–53, 60–61, 99
Arabic, 52–53
De Orbis terrae concordia, 53, 60, 99
Abrahamic religion, 52–53
Muslims as *semichristianos*, 61
Propst, Jakob, 178
Pseudo-al-Ghazālī, 229–230

Qur'ān, 11–12, 58–59, 91–92, 217
Melanchthon, 212
Luther, 59, 91–92, 98, 103, 108, 212–217, 217
and deity of Christ, 202–203
and Holy Spirit, 192–193, 201, 202–203, 105
and Trinity, 202–203
Translations, 10–12, 58, 59 (see Robert of Ketton)

Reason, Luther and, 182–183
Epistemology, 228–229
Religion, True and False, 212–213, 215–216
Christianity, 164, 166, 214
and Islam, 166–167
and revelation, 218, 219–220, 228–229
and Incarnation, 220–222
Study of, 212
Riccoldo da Monte di Croce, 12–15, 54, 91, 182, 198–199
Contra legem Sarracenorum, 13–15, 97, 98, 100–101, 102, 108
Criticism of, 198–201
Legacy of, 15
Muḥammad, 14–15, 58
Robert of Ketton, 11–12, 58–59, 103
Criticism of, 11–12

Safavids (and Shī'a), 33–34, 111
Ismā'il, 34
Tahmasp, 37
Selim I, 34–35
Sigismund I, 37
Sixtus IV, 39
Spalatin, George, 67
Süleyman I, 1, 31, 35–38, 41, 78
Conquests, 35–38
and Luther, 94

Theology of glory, 143–144, 162
Three-Estate Doctrine, 131–141
Domestic estate, 136–138
and Islam, 146–147, 176, 233
Political estate, 138–139
and government, 144
and Islam, 144–146
Spiritual estate, 134–135
and Islam, 142–144
Travel literature, 23–29
Peregrinatio, 23–24
Tractatus, 25–29
Treason, 44–45, 85–87, 88–90, 163
Türkenglocken, 47
Two Kinds of Righteousness, 156–159
and Islam, 158–159, 163, 168–172, 234
Two Kingdoms Doctrine, 71–72, 76–77, 154–156

Urban II, 10

Vienna, Siege of, 1, 36, 71, 85, 153, 166

Zapolya, John, 36–37
Zöckler, Otto, 4
Zwingli, Ulrich, 51, 59